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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PRINCIPAL AS PERCEIVED BY
ILLINOIS K-8 PRINCIPALS WHO BELONG TO GENERATION X

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

PROGRAM IN CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

BY

KEITH WESTMAN

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

DECEMBER 2010

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ABSTRACT

The roles and responsibilities of the school principal have changed throughout the years, and, with that, the face of the principalship has changed, too. The average age of principals in the United States is 57 with a significant portion of those individuals retiring within the next ten years (United States Department of Labor, 2008). As these principals retire, the qualities and characteristics of the next generation of principals must be identified. However, it may not be as easy to fill these vacancies as it once was.

Within the context of the research that has been done on Generation X, the Theory of Professional Vitality and the Job Attraction Theory, this study investigated the roles and responsibilities of the principalship as perceived by Illinois public elementary and middle school principals who belong to Generation X. Responses to this study indicated that Generation X principals are motivated by observing personal growth within members of the school community and challenged by the time required to complete the many tasks required of the public school principal.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Wanted: A miracle worker who can do more with less, pacify rival groups, endure chronic second guessing, tolerate low levels of support, process large volumes of paper and work double shifts (75 nights a year out). He or she will have carte blanche to innovate, but cannot spend much money, replace any personnel, or upset any constituency (Evans, 1995).

The roles and responsibilities of the school principal have changed throughout the years, and, with that, the face of the principalship has changed, too. The average age of principals in the United States is 57 with a significant portion of those individuals retiring within the next ten years (United States Department of Labor, 2008). As these principals retire, the qualities and characteristics of the next generation of principals must be identified. However, it may not be as easy to fill these vacancies as it once was.

Increasingly, principals are expected to serve as instructional leaders in their schools, helping translate standards-based changes into practice and coalesce teachers into high-functioning teams (Sawchuck, 2008). The principal's job is never done, and, in the eyes of many, is never done right. Principals are increasingly asked to do more, with less, and without "ruffling the feathers" of any group vested in the school system. At the very time that proactive leadership is essential, principals are in the least favorable position to provide it (Fullen, 1998). The changing roles and responsibilities of the principalship have changed the way teachers view the principalship leading some to become concerned about a principal shortage. How will the field of education overcome

this shortage when the principalship, to many, may seem like an unattractive job? To thwart the shortage and keep schools on the cutting edge, diligence in cultivating, training, and inspiring a new generation of school leaders- especially for the principalship, must be exercised (Lovely, 2004).

As the demand for quality principals increases, it is essential that the supply of incoming school principals is sufficient. Typically, an experienced teacher, or a teacher leader, would meet the profile of a potential candidate for the principalship. However, according to a recent study by the University of Arkansas, teacher leaders reported the following reasons for not wanting to pursue the principalship:

- The pressures of testing and accountability
- The job is generally too stressful
- Too much time is required
- Societal problems making it difficult to be an instructional leader
- Difficulty in satisfying the demands of the parents and community (Carnine, Hewitt, Pijanowski, & Denny, 2008).

And while this study researched the changing face of the principalship based on data collected in Illinois public schools, the aforementioned study is still important as according to a study by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), the entire nation will soon experience a shortage of school administrators. As further evidence of the shortage of school principals, over 55% of public schools have reported difficulty attracting applicants to fill vacancies (Bowles, 1990; Educational Research

Service, 1998; Fenwick, 2000; Malone & Caddell, 2000; McAdams, 1998; Sinatra, 2000).

Undoubtedly, other factors must be considered when researching the changing face of the principalship. Aside from analyzing the current roles and responsibilities of the principalship, other factors may contribute to an individual's ability to stay in the principalship. Successful teachers and school leaders have been researched in the past and researchers have noted the personal attributes that characterized these individuals. They displayed, through who they were and how they acted, a deep and passionate commitment to their work (Day, 2004). This was communicated directly through their sense of humor, interpersonal warmth, patience, empathy and support of their staff, parents' and pupils' self-esteem and a capacity for continued reflection of different kinds (Day, 2000). Professional vitality is a term used to focus the definition of passion as it relates to an individual's profession or career path. According to Harvey and Donaldson (2003), Professional Vitality is the ability to consistently work with:

- Passion - a strong sense of inner purpose,
- Vigor - mental, physical, and emotional energy,
- Facility - "savvy" and ability to do the job, and
- Satisfaction - a sense of pleasure, accomplishment, and fulfillment.

In addition to the personal characteristics that may contribute to a principal successfully meeting the current roles and responsibilities of the principalship, the impact of gender must also be researched. However, several researchers have noted that, despite the leadership differences that may exist between male and female principals, the most

significant factor in solving the principal shortage issue relies on the ability to redefine the principalship. More reasonable parameters need to be developed for the role of the principal, so that principals, regardless of gender, can manage the demands of their professional and personal lives (Boris-Schacter & Langer, 2002; Hurley, 2001; Riehl & Byrd, 1997).

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the changing face of the principalship through the perceptions of Illinois public school principals who belong to Generation X. This study identified the reasons for which these principals left the classroom for a career in educational leadership. The primary research question was *what are the perceptions of Illinois K-8 principals', who belong to Generation X, regarding the public school principalship?*

Specifically, the fundamental research questions were:

1. Why did the principal decide to pursue a principalship at a relatively young age?
2. What are the most rewarding aspects of the principalship?
3. What challenges does the principal face?
4. What supports are necessary for a new principal to retain his or her professional vitality?

Before exploring the specific research questions being posed in this study, some background information about the principalship including the history of the principalship, the principal's job description, and factors that influence a principal's ability to be successful in the position will be presented.

The History of the Principalship

In the 1950s, the principal was primarily a manager of the school. Using this method principals relied on a rational set of structuring guidelines, such as rules and procedures, hierarchy, and clear division of labor (Allen, 1998). To some, this form of leadership presented few surface-level benefits: orderly hallways, quiet classrooms, and subordinate teachers. However, to a generation of teachers who learned to teach the “whole” child, this approach may not be consistent with the way prospective principals practice instructional leadership. The National Association of Elementary School Principals’ recent guide to professional development for principals emphasizes the leader’s role in creating a dynamic learning community by giving the highest priority to student and adult learning, setting high expectations, demanding content and instruction that ensure student achievement, creating a culture of continuous adult learning, using data to guide improvement, and actively engaging the community (NAESP, 2008).

In the 1960s and 1970s, the principal became more of a leader following a vision rather than a manager following protocol. The ideal leader...is aptly described as the ‘post-heroic leader’, or as the Chinese proverb says, the best leader is one who, when he is gone, they will say, we did it ourselves. In the early 1980’s the National Commission on Excellence in Education called for reforming the recruitment of educational administrators (*A Nation at Risk: The Imperative of Educational Reform*, 1983). In response to *A Nation at Risk*, the 1990’s saw a shifting in the principal’s role towards a focus on being a leader who not only set the goals for the school, but also was the primary facilitator, or professional development provider, with the end result being an

increase in student achievement. This change in focus occurred due to the belief that when a site administrator organizes and supports institutional activities that promote positive relationships amongst novice teachers and experienced teachers, morale is greatly improved and the beginning teachers' self-concept is strengthened (Wood, 2005).

To perform the tasks (of the principalship) successfully, the principal would now need, above all, a vision and goals- a vision which comprehends school activities as they arise and make claim for immediate attention. The principal also needs a vision that is superior in its outlook and which is above and in excess of the view needed for the temporary emergency and the daily routine. Finally, the principal needs educational goals that rests firmly upon solid convictions scientifically grounded and experimentally tested in practice (Davis, 1921). In other words, the principal would need to possess the skills necessary to create and implement a school vision while also possessing the skills necessary to address the more urgent day-to-day operations of the school building.

In recent years, a principal is not only required to be a good manager and leader, but also a psychologist, teacher, facilities manager, police officer, cheerleader, philosopher, diplomat, social worker, PR director, mentor and coach (Trail, 2000). Today's principal must be proficient at the art of multi-tasking while being mindful of never paying too much attention to any one issue. The principal must pay the right amount of attention to the right issues. This concept of the servant leadership model (Sergiovanni, 1992; Sterratt. 2003) suggests that leaders serve others within the organization while staying focused on achieving results in line with the qualities and integrity of the organization itself. In the past, in hierarchical leadership, the power of the

principal was visible and obeyed by those lower in the organization (Hesselbein, Goldsmith, Beckhard, & Schubert, 1998; Senge, 1990). In today's servant-leadership, it is through strategies of service and stewardship, that a principal is identified by the people to be a leader among equals or "primus inter pares (Greenleaf, 1976; DePree, 1989; DePree, 1992). Successful principals are not successful because they find and apply brilliant theories. They are successful because they are able to sort out and make intelligent sense of disordered jumble of impressions (Tate, 2003).

Despite the changes in the roles and responsibilities of the school principal, principalships continue to be filled by qualified individuals. This study will analyze the perceptions of the kindergarten through eighth grade principalship by school principals under the age of 35. It is important to study this particular demographic as, according to the *Illinois Principals Association 2008-2009 Salary, Fringe Benefit, and Career Plan Study*, although the average age of Illinois principals is 50, there also exists a population of principals who (Milbrey Wallin McLaughlin, 2006) are between the ages of 28 and 35. This study will focus on this demographic so that the roles and responsibilities of the principalship, from their perspective, can be identified.

The Principal's Job Description

For this study, it is important that we establish a basic understanding of the modern day principal's roles and responsibilities. Leithwood and Riehl, in 2003, describe six claims about the effective school principal that are research-based, and applicable to most school contexts:

1. Successful school leadership makes important contributions to the improvement of student learning.
2. The primary sources of successful leadership in schools are principal and teachers.
3. In addition to principals and teachers, leadership is, and ought to be, distributed to others and in the community.
4. A core set of 'basic' leadership practices is valuable in almost all contexts: setting directions, developing people, redesigning the organization.
5. In addition to engaging in a core set of leadership practices, successful leaders must act in ways that acknowledge the accountability-oriented policy context in which almost all work, including the market, decentralization, and professional and management accountability.
6. Many successful leaders in schools serving highly diverse student populations enact practices to promote school quality, equity and social justice through: building powerful forms of teaching and learning; creating strong communities in school; nurturing the development of educational cultures in families; expanding the amount of students' social capital valued by the schools (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003).

Further evidence to support these claims has been found in other research. Case studies of exceptional schools indicate that school leaders influence learning primarily by galvanizing effort around ambitious goals and by establishing conditions that support teachers and that help students succeed (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Togneri &

Anderson, 2003). Their level of involvement often dictates whether attempts to change instruction succeed (Riordan, 2003). For example, studies have shown that school leaders, especially within low-performing schools, are typically ineffective in providing support and mentoring to improve instruction, and providing direction and resources for teacher learning and professional development within and outside the school (Riordan, 2003; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001).

While these claims take into account a more complex view of the principalship, it is also important to identify the more task-oriented responsibilities of the principalship. A common job description used in the recruitment of a new elementary school principal, according to the National Association of Elementary School Principals and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (2002) may include the following:

Duties and Responsibilities:

- **General Planning**

The principal conceptualizes the broad goals of the school and plans accordingly to ensure that procedures and schedules are implemented to carry out the total school program.

- **General Coordination**

The principal ensures that the school program is compatible with the legal, financial, and organizational structure of the school system. The principal defines the responsibilities and accountability of staff members and develops plans for interpreting the school program to the community.

- **Enhancement of Personnel Skills**

The principal provides activities which facilitate the professional growth of the school staff and enhance the quality of the instructional program.

- **School Objectives**

The principal identifies the annual objectives for the instructional, extracurricular, and athletic programs of the school.

- **Curriculum Objectives**

The principal ensures that instructional objectives for a given subject and/or classroom are developed, and involves the faculty and others in the development of specific curricular objectives to meet the needs of the school program. The principal provides opportunities for staff participation in the school program.

- **Establishes Formal Work Relationships**

The principal establishes implements and evaluates procedures used to carry out the daily routine of the school.

- **Evaluates Performance**

The principal evaluates student progress in the instructional program by means that include the maintaining of up-to-date student data. The principal supervises and appraises the performance of the school staff.

- **Facilitates Organizational Efficiency**

The principal maintains inter-school system communication and seeks assistance from central office staff to improve performance. The principal

maintains good relationships with students, staff, and parents. The principal complies with established lines of authority.

- **New Staff and Students**

The principal orients and assists new staff members and new students and provide opportunities for their input in the school program.

- **Community**

The principal encourages the use of community resources, cooperates with the community in the use of school facilities, interprets the school program for the community, and maintains communication with community members.

- **Supplies and Equipment**

The principal manages, directs, and maintains records on the materials, supplies and equipment which are necessary to carry out the daily school routine. The principal involves the staff in determining priorities for instructional supplies.

- **Services**

The principal organizes, oversees, and provides support to the various services, supplies, materials, and equipment provided to carry out the school program. The principal makes use of community resources.

Additionally, the National Policy Board for Educational Administration recently released the Educational Leadership Policy Standards: ISLLC 2008 which states the following:

An education leader promotes the success of every student by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders.

Standard 1:

An education leader promotes the success of every student by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

Functions:

- A.** Nurture and sustain a culture of collaboration, trust, learning, and high expectations
- B.** Create a comprehensive, rigorous, and coherent curricular program
- C.** Create a personalized and motivating learning environment for students
- D.** Supervise instruction
- E.** Develop assessment and accountability systems to monitor student progress
- F.** Develop the instructional and leadership capacity of staff
- G.** Maximize time spent on quality instruction
- H.** Promote the use of the most effective and appropriate technologies to support teaching and learning
- I.** Monitor and evaluate the impact of the instructional program

Standard 2:

An education leader promotes the success of every student by ensuring management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

Functions:

- A.** Monitor and evaluate the management and operational systems
- B.** Obtain, allocate, align, and efficiently utilize human, fiscal, and technological resources
- C.** Promote and protect the welfare and safety of students and staff
- D.** Develop the capacity for distributed leadership
- E.** Ensure teacher and organizational time is focused to support quality instruction and student learning

Standard 3:

An education leader promotes the success of every student by collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.

Functions:

- A.** Collect and analyze data and information pertinent to the educational environment
- B.** Promote understanding, appreciation, and use of the community's diverse cultural, social, and intellectual resources
- C.** Build and sustain positive relationships with families and caregivers
- D.** Build and sustain productive relationships with community partners

Standard 4:

An education leader promotes the success of every student by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.

Functions:

- A.** Ensure a system of accountability for every student's academic and social success
- B.** Model principles of self-awareness, reflective practice, transparency, and ethical behavior
- C.** Safeguard the values of democracy, equity, and diversity
- D.** Consider and evaluate the potential moral and legal consequences of decision-making
- E.** Promote social justice and ensure that individual student needs inform all aspects of schooling

Standard 5:

An education leader promotes the success of every student by understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

Functions:

- A.** Advocate for children, families, and caregivers
- B.** Act to influence local, district, state, and national decisions affecting student learning
- C.** Assess, analyze, and anticipate emerging trends and initiatives in order to adapt leadership strategies (www.ccsso.org, 2008)

Obviously, the roles and responsibilities of the school principal have changed over time. Principals are required to be proficient in the areas of task management, while being able to serve as a visionary for their school. School leaders must be able to balance accountability (legal obligations) against responsibility (concern for people) (Gross & Shapiro, 2002). Other researchers (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 1992; Gold & Simon,

2004; Gross, Shaw, & Shapiro, 2003) have supported claims that accountability in school leadership must be balanced with moral and ethical obligations to “do the right thing.”

Despite the change in the roles and responsibilities of the position, school principals throughout the country are adjusting to the changes and succeeding in fulfilling their new obligations to the principalship in their schools.

Factors Contributing to a Successful Principalship

Passion

Merriam-Webster’s Online Dictionary (2009) defines passion as ‘intense, driving, or overmastering of feeling or conviction’. In Christopher Day’s 2004 study, *The Passion of School Leadership*, of ten principals from underprivileged schools, six areas of passion emerged as reasons to why these principals continued in their positions:

1. A passion of achievement
2. A passion for care
3. A passion for collaboration
4. A passion for commitment
5. A passion for trust
6. A passion for inclusivity (Day, 2000)

Passion was also associated with fairness and understanding, qualities also constantly named by students in their assessments of what makes good teachers, and with their assessments of the qualities that principals display in everyday social interactions with students. Other qualities reported were listening to what staff and students say,

being close rather than distant, having a good sense of playfulness and humor, encouraging staff and students to learn in different ways, relating learning to experience, encouraging all to take a collegial responsibility for learning, maintaining organized classrooms and school environments, being knowledgeable about their work, creating learning environments which engaged both staff and students and stimulated them in and excitement to learn (Day, 2004). Passionate principals, in other words, are respectful of their students and teachers and encourage them to express their individuality as members of the school community.

As defined above, passion is a feeling, which some may argue cannot be taught or learned. However, the principalship is a position which requires a unique skill set which, through appropriate preservice training and mentoring, can improve a new principal's chance a success in the principalship.

Mentoring

Preservice preparation, induction, and ongoing professional development programs for school administrators [principals] have typically taken a functionalist approach to training school leaders (Slater, 2005). It is important to consider the amount of real experience a preservice program can actually create when, the fact remains that a preservice experience is usually done under direction of an existing school administrator. Principalship aspirants acquire in their preservice preparation programs a set of skills and knowledge that "experts" in the field have decided they should have, and they are then sent out into schools to apply what they have learned (Zellner, 2002). However, there

must be an appropriate level of support for a new principal once he or she is placed into the field to apply what he or she has learned in his or her preservice training.

One such means of providing mentorship to principals, in Illinois, is through the Illinois New Principal Mentoring Program (INPMP, 2008-2009). The goals and objectives of the Illinois New Principal Mentoring Program (Illinois Principal Mentoring, 2009) include the application of the Illinois Professional School Leader Standards and the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards (2008) to leadership practice and the school leader's role in supporting teaching and learning throughout a professional learning community.

Through a structured set of activities and expectations, new principals are paired with veteran principals in an effort to provide the new principal with the pieces of knowledge that may not have been present in their preservice program. The end result of this deliberate mentorship is an expectation that principals new to the position have the support needed, early in their tenure, so that the likelihood of them staying in the principalship is great.

In addition to a principal having a passion for the principalship, and having the mentorship support necessary to successfully manage the roles, responsibilities and expectations of the principalship, there exist other factors which contribute to a successful experience in the principalship. Many researchers have suggested that the following characteristics must be present in order for a principal to be successful:

- Effective principals are ethical (McEwan, 2003)

- Effective leaders synthesize and assemble a vision with input from all stakeholders (Fullan, 1997)
- Effective principals establish clear goals (Marzano, 2005)
- Effective principals seek out opportunities that actively engage the community in the school (Beck & Murphy, 1996)

While the aforementioned characteristics can be measured, a principal's ability to possess the traits associated with professional vitality is essential.

With all of these expectations of the school principal, and the pending shortage of qualified school principals, it is important that the perceptions of the principalship are identified by the individuals who will most likely be filling these vacancies in the coming years.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the changing face of the principalship through the perceptions of Illinois public school principals under the age of 35. The primary research question was *what are the perceptions of Illinois K-8 principals', who belong to Generation X, regarding the public school principalship?*

Specifically, the fundamental research questions were:

1. Why did the principal decide to pursue a principalship at a relatively young age?
2. What are the most rewarding aspects of the principalship?
3. What challenges does the principal face?

4. What supports are necessary for a new principal to retain his or her professional vitality?

In order to address these research questions, a qualitative questionnaire was constructed by the researcher and used to collect information from K-8 principals who were currently working in an Illinois public school, excluding principals who work in the City of Chicago, and who are members of Generation X.

In an era when confidence in public educators is falling, recruitment for school leadership roles is becoming more difficult. The desire to lead and stay in a leadership is not a position of choice, but of challenge. Even with emphasis on infusion of leadership throughout the school (site-based decision making) and de-emphasis on a more traditional managerial leadership style, school leadership has not become easier nor more desirable as an occupation (Zellner et al., 2002).

In light of the coming retirement of many Illinois public school principals, the supply of qualified *and* quality candidates must be available to fill these vacancies. The principalship has changed over the years, and, despite these changes, educators continue to choose a path in educational leadership and leave the classroom. According to a study by the Illinois Principals Association (Klass, 2009), 39% of the principals surveyed for the study reported the intent to retire within the next five years. This percentage is more than twice the percentage reported in 2008. However, retirement plans are not the only reason why the demand for Illinois principals exists. In the same study (Klaas, 2009), other factors contributing to the future demand for school principals are:

- Current principals are seeking central office position within or outside of the current district; and
- Current principals are seeking a superintendency within or outside of the current district.

While school districts face the challenge of filling principal vacancies, it is imperative that the roles and responsibilities of the principalship be well-defined, and possibly even reshaped, in order to make the job both attractive, and doable.

The Job Attraction Theory, formulated by Rynes and Barber (1990) suggests a redesign of the roles and responsibilities of the principal so that the less desirable aspects of the role are altered. Rynes and Barber identified three primary reasons that one may be attracted to a position:

1. Individual characteristics of the job seeker
2. Attributes of the job
3. Organizational characteristics (conditions of the workplace) (p. 286).

Through the frameworks of the Job Attraction Theory and Professional Vitality, the data collected in this study will be used to recommend a course of action for school districts to follow so that the roles and responsibilities of the principal are clear to the next generation of school leaders.

Significance and Limitations

As a result of this study, the researcher intended to identify the changing face of the principalship through the perspectives of K-8 principals who belong to Generation X. Furthermore, the researcher intended to identify the reasons why an individual may pursue the principalship at a relatively young age, the unique challenges that young principals face, the most rewarding aspects of the principalship, and the factors that contribute to their overall professional vitality toward the principalship.

A possible limitation to this study was that the principals surveyed will not have a minimum tenure in the principalship. So, it was possible that a responder was a first year principal who is planning on leaving the position after the end of the school year due to dissatisfaction with the position, or, conversely, a second year principal who may choose to pursue another position in education in the central office. This may be a limitation as these types of individuals may have planned on leaving the principalship early as part of their professional plan to work in the central office, not due to dissatisfaction with the principalship. Or, a first year principal may not have the experience necessary to see the principalship from the perspective of a person who has done it for more than one year. After all, all new jobs present new challenges.

For this study, though, the mere fact that someone has entered the principalship, suggests an initial willingness to face the challenges that are very much a part of the position. This input will make a positive contribution to this study.

Another possible limitation to this study is the researcher's biases toward the subject. The researcher was a middle school principal at the age of 30. After three years

in the principalship, the researcher left to take a position in the private sector. The researcher's personal feelings toward the roles and responsibilities of the principalship are tainted, in both a positive and negative way, based on his experience in the position. To mitigate the impact that the researcher's own biases may have on this study, the researcher kept a journal of the researcher's thoughts, feelings, and reactions while pursuing this study. It was important, that through this entire research process, the researcher had the opportunity to process his feelings in a journal in order to ensure that any biases that emerge are written in the journal and not written in this study.

Finally, this data is limited to the State of Illinois and should not be generalized to other states. Illinois is unique in that there is a wide variety of school systems present within the state. In the Chicagoland area, it is not uncommon to have four or more school districts serving one specific suburb or for one school district to serve grades K-8 while a neighboring school district is PreK-12. Additionally, school districts that are located outside of the Chicagoland area tend to be more rural in structure and in the demographics of the population in which they serve. These factors unique to Illinois may present a limitation in this study.

The principalship, like teaching, is a service occupation. Built into the position is an idea of contributing to the lives of others and improving the educational environment for all involved. Many men and women select educational leadership for reasons that are, at heart, humanitarian (Moore, 1999).

In order to more fully consider the perceptions of the next generation of school principals, this study will now present, through the Chapter II literature review, the

history of the principalship, the Superintendent's perception of the attractiveness of the principalship, the redefinition of the principalship, and principal evaluation, in an effort to answer the primary research question; *What are the perceptions of Illinois K-8 principals', who belong to Generation X, regarding the public school principalship?*

Specifically, why did the principal decide to obtain a principalship at a relatively young age; what are the most rewarding aspects of the principalship; what unique challenges do principals under the age of 35 face; and, what supports are necessary o a new principal to retain his or her professional vitality?

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter summarizes the literature relevant to the primary research question of this study. The primary research question is *what are the perceptions of Illinois K-8 principals', who belong to Generation X, regarding the public school principalship?* Specifically, the fundamental research questions are:

1. Why did the principal decide to pursue a principalship at a relatively young age?
2. What are the most rewarding aspects of the principalship?
3. What challenges does the principal face?
4. What supports are necessary for a new principal to retain his or her professional vitality?

The literature review will discuss the history of the principalship, the Superintendent's perception of the attractiveness of the principalship, the redefinition of the principalship, and principal evaluation, in an effort to answer the primary research question.

The History of the Principalship

By the late nineteenth century in both America and Canada, most urban school systems had graded elementary and secondary schools with some form of a building principal who reported to a district officer (Tyack & Hansot, 1990). Rice (1969) stated that the responsibilities of principals were to serve as "lord and masters of their own

schools.” Depending on the location of a school or school district, the principal served as the educational manager for one building, or multiple buildings. In some instances, a principal would simply serve in the same capacity as a clerk. In more rural schools, the principal simply did not exist.

Over the course of the past 100 years, school buildings transformed from a teacher-leading-the-students organization, to a principal leading the teachers and students organization. Due to this reorganization of the school setting, and the introduction of a person (the principal) whose primary job responsibility was the supervision of professionals (the teachers), schools saw the emergency of power struggles as the principal became an educational manager in an increasingly complex school bureaucracy (Rousmaniere, 2007).

Well into the twentieth century, professional issues plagued the elementary principalship. The principal retained many of the roles and responsibilities of the head teacher with many job descriptions, teaching responsibilities, and low status. Elementary school principals were more likely than secondary school principals to teach classes, be involved with direct instruction with children in the hallway, playground, lunch room, and in community and social service organizations (Ayers, 1929). In addition, gender inequality was present in elementary schools throughout the country. The elementary school had long been considered both the domain of women and an institution that resisted formal bureaucratic order (Rousmaniere, 2007).

By the 1960s, the elementary schools resembled the times, with males primarily serving as principals and females primarily serving as teachers. Institutional and personal

definitions of manhood and womanhood played out in the selection of who would hold the elementary school leadership position (Rousmaniere, 2007). To further increase the number of males who would assume positions as school principals, colleges and universities throughout the country began to focus on attracting male veterans into the principalship. In addition, men were also targeted to create a structure within a school which was consistent with the traditional norms of families within this period of time where males were the “head of the family.” The athletic, married male principal offered school districts a vision of stability and professionalism (Blount, 1998). The impact of these ideologies was noted in the tremendous decrease in the percentage of women in the principalship. By the 1970s, women held less than a quarter of the principalships in the United States (Shakeshaft, 1985).

Demographics

At the turn of the 21st century, the elementary school principalship, once again, found itself redefining gender equality within the professional position. During the 1993-1994 school year, the majority of elementary school principals were men but by the 1999-2000 school year, the majority was women. These numbers reflect a significant decline from a peak in 1978 when men comprised 82% of the elementary school principalship population (Pharis & Zachariya, 1978) to 58% in 1984 (NCES, 2004). Between 1993-1994 and 1999-2000, the proportion of elementary school principals who were women rose from 41% to 52%, and this percentage increased to 56% during the 2003-2004 school year (NAESP, 2006). Females remain more likely to choose a career path that begins in elementary schools while males tend to begin their careers in

leadership at the middle or high school level (Graham, 1997; McNergney & Herbert, 1995). Nationwide, in 1993-1994, 43% of elementary school principals were over 50 years of age; in 1999-2000, 54% were 50+ years old. The number of younger principals (under 40 years of age) only increased from 7 to 10% (National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2003).

In an attempt to identify several common characteristics, The National Center for Education Statistics (NAESP, 2006) completed a survey of the nation's elementary school principals. The results show that the number of public elementary school principals grew from 54,000 in 1993-1994 to 61,000 in 2003-2004. About 31,000 of these public elementary school principals worked in schools in suburban areas, 17,000 in urban areas and 14,000 in rural areas. The ethnic affiliation of these 31,000 elementary school principals range from 81% white, 11% black, 6% Hispanic, to 2% American Indian, Alaska Native, or Asian/Pacific.

Results from the survey also specified that public elementary school principals generally had several years of school experience. Data from the 2003-2004 school year indicated that elementary school principals had spent an average of 14 years as a teacher and eight as a principal. The length of experience is noteworthy considering that the proportion of elementary school principals 55 or older increased from 19% in 1993-1994 to 28% in 2003-2004.

During this same time period, the proportion of principals who were 45 to 49 declined from 31% to 18%, and the proportion of those 40 to 44 declined from 19% to 10%. Principals under 40 years of age illustrated a modest increase from 7 to 15% over

the ten-year time span (NAESP, 2006). On a related matter, over 85% of all principals have been teachers (Papa, Lankford, & Wyckoff, 2002).

Almost all of the surveyed elementary school principals have advanced degrees. Nearly 60% had a master's degree, 30% had an educational specialist degree, and 8% had a doctorate. Principals with a master's degree had an average salary of \$74,000 compared with \$78,000 for those with an educational specialist degree and \$83,000 for those with a doctorate (NAESP, 2006).

Roles and Responsibilities

The typical work day for an elementary school principal has changed dramatically over the past century. The elementary principalship was originally conceptualized in terms of the "principal teacher" (Peterson, 1970). Out of this original concept has grown the idea that the elementary school principal should devote most of his/her time and work for instructional supervision (The Elementary School Principalship, 1948). In recent decades, the role of the elementary school principal has shifted to a combination of managerial roles with the roles associated with an instructional leader (Hord & Hirsch, 2009; Renner, 2001).

The changing face of the principalship is not a new phenomenon. As presented in the literature, the principalship has been an evolving position ever since it was introduced into American public school systems. The research on principals' role changes since the 1980s comprises a large body of literature that was a mix of theoretical and empirical data (Copeland, 2001; Geocaris, 2004; Goodwin, 2002; Hallinger, 1992; Lashway, 2002; Murphy, 1994; Trail, 2000; Whitaker, 2003). Many authors, such as state policymakers

and program analysts, academics, private nonprofit education research development and dissemination organizations, state education agencies, and interest groups such as the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the National Association of Elementary School Principals have contributed to the literature on the principal's role change since the 1980s. These authors had a multitude of different affiliations and purposes, and they approached this topic through different levels of rigor. This area has been explored using both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Although the role of the principal had been the topic of discussion prior to the 1980s, the focus was largely researching the principal as a manager (Boyd, 1992; Hallinger, 1992; Irwin, 2002). Hallinger (1992) wrote,

During the 1960s and 1970s, a new role emphasis emerged for American principals as they became increasingly responsible for managing federally sponsored, funded programs designed to assist special student populations. By the mid 1970s, relatively few American principals could avoid the responsibilities that came with programme and curriculum management. (p. 36)

In the 1980s, there was an emphasis on site-based management and the national commission report, *A Nation at Risk*, changed the focus of the principal. Also influential during this time was the work of Ron Edmonds (1979) and the effective schools research. The principal, as a key figure in schools, was the focus of much debate and his or her role as the "instructional leader" was beginning to be defined in the literature (Murphy, 1994). Researchers and theorists wrote about the changing role of the principalship and described the external factors contributing to the changes in numerous ways (Copeland, 2001; Hallinger, 1992; Murphy, 1994; Murphy & Hallinger, 1992; Portin, 1997; Portin, Shen, & Williams, 1998; Tirozzi, 2001). Regardless of the ways in which changes were

categorized, it was clear that there had been an increase in the complexity of the principalship from the 1980s to 2003, and these changes were contributing to the dwindling number of qualified principal candidates willing to take the job (Whitaker, 2003).

The unexpected skills needed to handle the elementary school principalship are not easily or quickly learned. Peterson and Deal (2009) noted that four characteristics of the job make learning the position difficult. First of all, the goals are unclear and hard to measure. An example of such a goal expected of a principal may include; the school will demonstrate excellence in education. This goal is unclear from the standpoint of the definition of excellence in education, how is it attained, and how it is measured. Second, the interaction rates are high and contact is extensive. The interactions may range from young at risk children, teachers, parents, textbook salesman, and central office administration. Third, the bases for moment-to-moment decision-making are unstructured and spontaneous. Typically, the unstructured and spontaneous reaction evolves from gathering information, assessing it, and then making a decision in rapid succession.

Fowler (1991) studied the qualities and characteristics of the effective principal. By collecting and analyzing the perceptions of effective teachers within the same school setting, the purpose of the study was to investigate whether principals who scored higher on an effectiveness scale possessed similar characteristics or beliefs. Data for the study were obtained from the Schools and Staffing Study of 1988 from the National Center for Education Statistics of the United States Department of Education.

The first findings of interest from this 1991 study were that principals who are younger, less experienced, lower salaried, female, and have held elementary school principalships in smaller communities had higher Perceived Principal Effectiveness (PPE) scale scores than other principals. The second finding of interest from the research was how principals perceive their time usage and how that relates to teachers' perceptions of effectiveness. Surprisingly, the principals that spent less time on administrative duties such as budgeting, building management, and scheduling showed no significant difference in effectiveness in comparison to principals who spend significant time on administrative duties.

The body of literature describing the changes that have occurred in the principalship illuminated the fact that the principalship has become more complex and challenging over time. The management expectations that were traditionally held with the principalship remained intact while the principal was expected to take more assertive roles in other domains including instructional leadership, site-based management, and testing accountability. The complexity of the principalship has resulted in high levels of stress, and this has contributed to the principal shortage.

The Principal Shortage

Throughout the literature, the research shows that not only is there is shortage in the quantity of principal candidates, but also in the quality of principal candidates (Educational Research Services, 1998, 2000; Pijanowski, 2009; Roza, 2003). The literature surrounding the issue of the principal shortage is plenty with everyone from respected educational researchers, to dissertators, to the mainstream media analyzing the

issue. The challenges reported by potential principal applicants include the complexity of the principalship, low salaries for the work that is required, high-stress levels, time commitments, societal problems, accountability, and lack of tenure (Cooley & Shen, 2000; ERS, 1998; Howley, Andrianaivo, & Perry, 2005).

To counteract the issue of the shortage in quality principal candidates, principal preparation programs appear to be the primary target of education reformers. Principal preparation programs are being called upon to be designed to provide not only the properly certified principal candidate pool, but a high quality principal candidate pool that can affect positive student outcomes. Specifically, (Young & Fuller, 2007), programs need:

1. Access to better evaluation models- measure, methodology, and instruments- to impact the value of their preparation on their graduates' subsequent work;
2. Technical assistance in building their capacity to incorporate evaluation and research and support continuous improvement efforts;
3. A database of evidence for benchmarking performance over time and within regional and institutional contexts.

The task of combating the principal shortage issue is multi-faceted. In addition to looking at principal preparation programs, consideration should also be given to the roles and responsibilities of the principalship, and the job satisfaction of those individuals currently in the principalship.

Herr (2000) conducted survey research in Pennsylvania to determine what factors have the greatest impact on an educator's decision to seek the principalship. The

researcher sent 256 surveys to administrators who began practicing in Pennsylvania in 1998 or later with a response rate of 76%. The survey included administrators from 22 of the 27 intermediate units, excluding the cities of Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. Herr identified three primary reasons for which the principals were not satisfied with the principalship; the compensation for the position, the long workdays, and ever increasing state and federal mandates that have been placed upon public schools. Although this study did not make formal recommendations for resolving the principal shortage, it was suggested that to increase the job satisfaction of the responding administrators, consideration should be given to increasing compensation, providing a more comprehensive mentoring program, developing a deep network of support and mentoring for new administrators, and redefining the roles and responsibilities of the principalship.

In recent years, there has been a drastic shift in the number of women principals as compared to their male counterparts within elementary school principalships. Elementary school principalships are being filled by individuals who previously occupied elementary teaching positions. A recent report by the National Education Association (2005) stated that the gender composition of the nation's elementary school teachers was 259,263 males and 1,558,375 females. In 2008, the Illinois elementary school teacher gender ratio was 30,111 males and 100,316 females making females represent 77% of the elementary school principalships in the state (Illinois State Report Card, 2008). As the proportion of males to females in elementary education continues to progress, it can be assumed that the male elementary school principal will soon be difficult to find assuming that the path to the elementary school principalship begins in the elementary school

classroom. Since the pathway to the elementary school principalship is primary through the elementary classroom, the decreasing number of male elementary classroom teachers will make it difficult to fill the elementary school principalship with male principals. This will represent a flip in the gender tendencies of the elementary school principalship when compared with previous decades.

According to a recent study (Winter, Rinehart, & Munoz, 2004), adding to the already shrinking numbers of prospective principal candidates and retirements may create an even greater stress on the number of male elementary school principals as the level of institutional knowledge that leaves the principal's office when a veteran principal retires will present the new principal with the task of relearning all of the information that is no longer available within the school.

The literature (Winter, Rinehart, & Munoz, 2004) consistently suggests that the shortage in qualified and quality principals is due to demands on the principal's time, the significant responsibilities of the position, the salary, the increased federal and state expectations, and the lack of effective mentoring and support programs for new principals (Educational Research Service, 1998; Educational Research Service, 2000; Herr, 2000; Love, 2000).

Rationale for Redefinition of the Principalship

It can be presumed, by the term "educational leader", that a building level administrator, or principal, will be responsible for providing leadership within the school he or she works. The importance of effective leadership in education is clear. Fred E. Fielder and Martin M. Chemers (2003) stated that the organization without effective

leadership is in trouble. Throughout the years, theorists, researchers, and practitioners have defined leadership in a many different ways; however, Crowley (1928) may have defined leadership in the most simple of terms; “the leader is the one who succeeds in getting others to follow him [or her]. More recently, Alston (2003) states that leadership is taking risks, making mistakes and learning from those mistakes. Leadership provides the very foundation for a sound educational program.

The American Heritage Dictionary (2009) defines leadership as “the capacity, or ability, to lead”. Therefore, effective leadership must be identified by another individual who may have the abilities to evaluate another’s ability to lead.

Mentoring Programs and Principal Preparation

The literature on mentoring is primarily anecdotal and theoretical in nature (Beyu & Holmes, 1992; Feiman-Nemser, 1996; Mullen & Lick, 1999; The Educational Alliance at Brown University, 2003; Wallace Foundation, 2007). The few empirical studies, which were qualitative in nature, reported some benefits of mentoring.

Mentoring of administrators has become more popular since 2000 as the demands of the principalship have continued to increase. Prior to 2000, only two states, Kentucky and West Virginia, required all new principals to undergo mentoring. By 2006, roughly half of the nation’s states had implemented such requirements (Wallace Foundation, 2007).

Daresh and Playko (1990) reported that information exists regarding benefits experienced by administrators serving as mentors. The researchers identified five themes from their qualitative research: (a) administrative mentors derived satisfaction from

participation, (b) mentors learned about other ideas from different school systems, (c) mentors expressed positive feelings about teaching, (d) mentors learned recent research on effective school practices, and (e) mentors perceived themselves to be of value to their school systems. The researchers recommended that additional research be conducted on mentoring relationships and their maintenance over time. Weingartner and Daresh (2008) state that most mentees find formal mentoring programs rewarding and express an appreciation for the support they receive from experienced principals.

According to Malone (2001), numerous school systems have begun principal preparation programs that produce effective leaders. Malone (2001) described the findings from a study of Albuquerque Public Schools' Extra Support for Principals (ESP) program originated in 1994. The researcher found that new principals, as well as their mentors, benefited significantly from the ESP program. The resulting program features a coordinator who examines beginning principals' backgrounds, asks them to supply a list of experienced principals with whom they would like to work, and then matches them with veteran leaders. These findings should be interpreted with caution as the methodology of the study was not described.

Browne-Ferrigno and Muth (2004) conducted two studies that provided insight regarding the importance of mentoring future administrators. The first study was an exploratory case study about practitioner growth of aspiring principals engaged in their initial professional training. The second study was a cross-cohort investigation in which the researchers sought to compare the influences of different field experiences on student preparation for the principalship. Although role transformation was the overarching

element of interest in the studies, the importance of mentoring and engagement in authentic administrative work emerged from the data.

Browne-Ferrigno and Muth (2004) found that “when mentoring effectively engages veteran, novice, and aspiring principals in reciprocal professional development, the community of practice continuously improves, expands, and deepens leadership capacity in schools and districts” (p. 189).

In Newman’s (2004) evaluation of the Dallas Public Schools Leadership Development Program, the researcher found that the principal mentor had a large influence on the satisfaction and success of the program. Principal mentors who were most helpful were ones who allowed the mentees to have responsibilities that involved meaningful tasks, as opposed the menial tasks, allowed their mentees to contribute to decisions that were being made, and were available to meet with their mentee regularly to provide meaningful and constructive feedback.

At the local level, many districts – particularly large urban districts – are trying to facilitate recruiting by increasing the supply of people interested in and qualified for school administrative positions through mentoring programs (Colvin, 2000). For suburban and rural school districts, especially smaller school districts, mentoring programs have been found to be particularly encouraging to principals who may not be able to find mentors and supportive colleagues within their own districts (Howley, Chadwick, & Howley, 2002). This type of encouragement assists the mentee in coping with professional isolation and the process of socialization into school administration circles (Dussault & Barnett, 1996), which then serves as a catalyst for one who is

considering administration. For example, in New York City, some districts have principal institutes that identify excellent teachers and encourage and prepare them to become successful administrators (Crow, Mecklowitz, & Weekes, 1992).

The ERS (1998) reports that principals in the study repeatedly express a desire to expand their expertise and personal skills but they find that their districts lack professional development activities. Professional development programs enable administrators to meet the challenges of educational leadership, which not only gives administrators the confidence to take on the leadership role at the beginning of their careers, but provides them with the competence to achieve success and, as a result, to realize satisfaction through their work. For instance, at California's Oxnard Union High School District, the staff-development coordinator meets monthly with a hand-picked group of classroom teachers to discuss leadership and other topics essential to the principal's role. These teachers are given opportunities to shadow principals and to learn about credential and degree programs in educational administration (Adams, 1999). The ERS insists that quality staff development programs for leaders should be long-term, planned, and job-embedded; which center on student achievement, reflective practice, and problem solving with peers.

Superintendents' Perception of the Attractiveness of the Principalship

Love (2000) generated findings in his survey research of 310 Arkansas public school superintendents, with a response rate of 92%. The researcher was trying to identify the perceptions of superintendents as to why individuals pursued the principalship. Moreover, the researched sought to identify the reason that individuals did

not apply for the principalship. This study also provided insight into the existence of district-level programs for aspiring principals.

Love (2000) found that a major factor discouraging qualified applicants from pursuing the principalship was the time commitments associated with the job. The researcher found that a redefinition of the roles and responsibilities of the principalship could potentially increase the likelihood that an individual would pursue the principalship. In addition, individuals would be more likely to pursue the principalship if the position seemed to be more attainable than is currently is perceived. Only 6% of districts in Arkansas that were in this study had an aspiring principal program. This study identified principal training programs as an area that needed to be examined more closely; however, the existence of aspiring principal programs are limited. The findings were also consistent with other research findings on the changing role of the principalship that identified time and stress as issues (Cooley & Shen, 2003; Goodwin, 2002; Portin, 1997). Due to the nature of these quantitative studies, more qualitative research is needed to better understand the perceptions of the principalship with regards, specifically, to the roles and responsibilities of the job.

In 1998, the Maryland State Department of Education published a research report entitled, "Maryland Task Force on the Principalship: Recommendations for Redefining the Role of the Principal; Recruiting, Retaining, and Rewarding Principals; and Improving Their Preparation and Development." This evaluative report was conducted in conjunction with the Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP).

Researchers surveyed and interviewed 21 of the 24 superintendents in the State of

Maryland along with 121 aspiring, assistant, and current principals on the shortage of prospective secondary administrators. Researchers found a shortage of candidates for the principal position in the State of Maryland, a trend that also faces the State of Illinois (National Council of Professors of Educational Administration, 2007). This study recommended that local school districts in Maryland to develop local principal training programs and programs for experienced principals. Although this study was limited to one state, it identified the need for school districts to develop their own training programs for principal candidates to ensure increased numbers of high quality candidates.

Redefinition of the Principalship

Researchers have called for creative ways to increase the number of qualified principal candidates throughout the country and to change the focus of the principal's duties (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; ERS, 2000; Roza, 2003).

If new principals were able to clearly identify the strategies and methodologies that were required to effectively lead their schools, as suggested by the evidence from the data collected within their schools, the responsibilities of the principalship would be more obvious and, therefore, more achievable.

In a meta-analysis of empirical evidence on the changing role of the principalship, Murphy (1994) described the effects of fundamental reform measures on the work environment of school principals with a focus on work overload and role ambiguity. The researcher categorized the role changes as leading from the center; enabling supporting teacher success; managing reform; and extending the school community. Murphy (1994)

stated, “Data indicate that school reform has increased principals’ work load as well as expanded the repertoire of skills they need to function effectively” (p. 7).

During Murphy’s meta-analysis, the researcher continued by citing Bredeson’s (1989) research on the role of principals in schools and stated, “Studies document that, while expectations are being added, little is being deleted from principal’s role” (Murphy, 1994, p. 7). Murphy also commented on Alexander’s (1992) research on urban schools citing the increased amount of stress that was placed on school administrators as a result of change efforts, role overload, and role ambiguity. Murphy (1994) also asserted that as principals were required to move toward “leading from the center,” this change required the development of new skills for many principals. Principals needed to develop skills in distributing their leadership and empowering other leaders. This also contributed to increased stress levels and more needs for training. Bennett et al. (1992) were cited for their research in Chicago where principals reported they were spending more time with management responsibilities than any other responsibility as reforms came along. Murphy continued by stating, “Reform means that there is simply more to do at the school level than was the case previously” (p. 21). The researcher’s findings should be interpreted with some caution due to the studies that were included in the sample. Murphy included a very broad range of empirical studies in his sample, including studies from seven different countries, studies that spotlighted principals in the restructuring effort, and studies that highlighted teachers in the restructuring effort that provided useful insight about the principal. There may be a difference in the perceptions and actions of principals in a restructuring process and an “average” principal not in a restructuring

process. In addition, the researcher examined the evolving role of the principal “early in the change process;” therefore, there is a possibility that he was drawing conclusions from findings that were still evolving or that the stress levels of this group were higher. The researcher’s use of a large range of empirical studies and the fact that his findings were consistent with subsequent research strengthen the credibility of his findings (Cooley & Shen, 2003; Goodwin, 2002; Portin, 1997).

Portin (1997) used a Delphi method to explore the changing role of school principals in Washington State. Focus group data were gathered from 47 Washington State National Association of Secondary School Principal members and the sample included a mix of elementary, middle, and high school principals from geographically different school districts. The second part of the study was a survey of 2,431 principals from Washington State with 840 surveys being returned. This represents a response rate of 34.6%. The data suggested that there were fundamental shifts in the role of the principal in Washington State. The principalship was described as being much more complex; principals expressed frustration in their capacity to lead their schools. The study also found that principals in Washington State felt constrained by the overwhelming nature of the added responsibilities, continuous innovation overload, unclear empowerment for direction setting, and low morale. The findings appear to be fairly representative of the sample population.

Goodwin (2002) utilized similar methods as did Portin (1997) to explore the changing role of the secondary principal. Thirty-eight high school principals from the 2000-2001 Met-Life-National Association of Secondary School Principal’s (NASSP)

Recognition Program participated in the first part of the study. The second part of the study consisted of a survey. A systematic random sample was used from the NASSP membership of high school principals, and 109 of 375 eligible members participated, for a return rate of 29%. The researcher was sent a pool of 380 principal applicants from the NAASP. Five schools did not meet the criteria of having a Grade 12, so the sample was reduced to 375 principals. The study found that principals perceived significant changes in their roles in the following four areas derived from the National Policy Board for Educational Administration standards: strategic leadership, instructional leadership, organizational leadership, and political and community leadership. The researchers found that principals identified a dichotomy between effective leadership and efficient management. The descriptors assigned to organizational leadership reflected the complexity of the principal's work, and it was in this area that the discussions incorporated the barriers of stress and time that participants reported as reasons for the shortage of principals. The findings in this study, although limited due to the small response rate of the survey, were consistent with Portin's in noting the principalship has become much more complex and the responsibilities have increased over time, thereby contributing to high levels of stress.

With quantitative methods, Cooley and Shen (2003) used data from the 1999-2000 Schools and Staffing Survey to describe how secondary school principals perceived the status of the accountability movement and their professional job responsibilities within the context of accountability. The sample size for this survey was 4,386 participants, with a weighted sample size of 23,267. The return rate was above 90%. The

researchers found that principals were under the pressure of accountability and their involvement in professional job responsibilities indicated that they were working on multiple fronts. The researchers also found that while principals are called on to engage in leadership initiatives such as instructional leadership to improve schools, they are still overwhelmed in the management of tasks due to the immediate nature of these tasks. This study was significant due to its large sample size and its national generalizability, as well as its support of the findings of previous empirical studies (Alexander, 1992; Bredeson, 1989; Murphy, 1994).

In an effort to redesign the roles and responsibilities of the school principalship, and to make the principalship a more attractive position to obtain, the Illinois School Leaders Task Force (2008) recommended that the State of Illinois Board of Education set new policies with regards to administrative certification that align ongoing professional development, early career mentoring, ongoing professional development, and principalship preparation programs with new standards. To support this recommendation, the Illinois Board of Higher Education, in collaboration with the Illinois State Board of Education, will require administrative preparation programs to redesign their programs to meet the new standards and submit their plans for approval by the year 2013.

As a means of better understanding what elementary school principals do, Renner (2001) completed an ethnographic investigation of elementary school principals' workdays. The focus of the study was six suburban elementary school principals. The

researcher spent five nonconsecutive workdays with each principal. After analysis of the data, the researcher concluded that two models of work appeared.

One of the models emphasized the similarities in work content. Fourteen similarities were apparent in the work content of principals, including the following (Renner, 2001):

1. All principals administer their schools according to goals, objectives, policies, and procedures specified by their boards.
2. All principals worked directly with their staffs and communities with an interpretation and implementation of the district goals, objectives, policies, and procedures.
3. All principals used the district goals, objectives, policies, and procedures toward development and implementation of the elementary school's goals and objectives.
4. All principals exchanged ideas, expertise, and resources with fellow administrators.
5. All principals provided instructional supervision.
6. All principals were concerned with the promotion of good public relations.

The second model specified ten similarities in work characteristics. Several similarities in this model include the following:

1. All principals' daily work activities varied, involved fragmentation, and were usually brief.

2. All principals exhibited a general familiarity with all aspects of their schools' operations.
 3. All principals scheduled work activities in advance.
 4. All principals assigned authority and responsibility to staff members.
 5. All principals experienced frequent job stress.
 6. All principals relied on the services of other individuals, groups, and agencies.
- (p. 177)

Significant differences were also identified in the ways that principals carried out the roles and responsibilities of their positions. These differences were the principals' personality, ability and methods for coping with job stressors, the expectations of the community, the demands and challenges facing the specific school, and the overall physical health and well-being of the principal.

The results of this research also indicated that the work lives of the principals were basically alike in that the majority of the principal's work time was devoted to managerial activities. Principals all expected their buildings to run efficiently and effectively. Moreover, each principal understood the value of a "team effort" in the day-to-day management of the building with multiple people, and their ability and willingness to do their particular jobs effectively, was crucial to running a good school.

Peterson (1981) also researched the ways that elementary and secondary education principals spent their work days. The analysis drew a precise portrait of a job characterized by an unending variety of brief interactions, frequent interruptions, and continual cognitive and emotional demands (Ellis, 1988). According to Peterson (1981),

these tasks require a wide variety of unexpected skills including bookkeeping, personnel management, budgeting, planning, and public relations and a wide variety of interactions with individuals ranging from young at-risk children to teachers, parents, salespeople, and central office personnel. As a result, the principal's time is filled with management, paperwork, marketing, and politics rather than the important work with the school community to shape a learning focused environment (Militello & Behnke, 2006).

The ways in which a principal uses his or her time, and the content of the principal's school day, need to be analyzed in an effort to develop the aspects of the principal's day that contribute to the overall increase in student achievement. Since the time of the Fowler (1991) study, a shift has occurred in the measure of effective leadership. The primary roles and responsibilities since this study have shifted from the principal serving as an educational manager, to the principal serving as an instructional and organizational leader. The phenomena include increased public information on student performance and the associated accountability of the public school system (Sergiovanni, 2001).

In addition, Sergiovanni (2001) argues that principals must be able to create a vision and plan to guide their school's improvement and to be effective in communicating this vision to school employees and the public. Williamson and Blackburn (2009) also emphasize the importance of a principal setting and communicating a vision for a school. Effective leadership literature also noted that principals must be flexible with regard to their frames of reference and be able and willing to adjust their thinking in response to the needs of different individuals and

situations (Bolman & Deal, 1997; Collins & Porras, 1999; Williamson & Blackburn, 2009).

Principal Evaluation

The need to redesign principal evaluation is a topic that emerges in most every piece of literature that discusses the roles, responsibilities, and redefinition of the public school principalship. However, much less attention is paid to principal evaluation than other topics that emerge in the same literature: principal preparation, job satisfaction, and the principal shortage.

Douglas Reeves (2008) assesses most principal evaluations as “infrequent, late, unhelpful, and largely a source of administrative bother.” Whereas most every school administrator undergoes some sort of formal evaluation on an annual basis, the effectiveness of the evaluation, in general, is minimal.

In a 2005 nationwide survey, Reeves found that principals agreed that their evaluations were generally positive (89%), accurate (79%), and consistent with job expectations (76%). However, fewer (around 60%) found the evaluation process had improved their performance or motivation, and only 47% said their evaluations were specific enough to know what behaviors should be changed.

Moreover, the methods by which existing principal evaluations are held present a compelling reason for a retooling of administrative evaluation processes. A sampling of 17 California districts (Stine, 2001) found three types of evaluations in use. Checklists rated principals on a variety of behaviors or traits, ranging from time management to loyalty. Free form evaluations consisted of a narrative. Evaluation by objectives

measured principal performance against a set of predetermined goals. Evaluations often combined different formats, resulting in a wide variety of procedures. Research on the principal evaluation practices in North Carolina also found great diversity, concluding that "the only consistency across the state was a considered lack of consistency" (UNC Center for School Leadership Development).

Reeves (2003) and Babo (2009) emphasize that productive evaluation processes are anchored in explicit standards that make the expectations clear to the district as well as the principal, and that also distinguish levels of proficiency. He identifies four categories: "exemplary," "proficient," "progressing," and "not meeting standards." With each category, Reeves prescribed different courses of follow-up actions with regards to improvement. Progressing principals may benefit from coaching on specific skills (perhaps provided by exemplary leaders whose best professional development activity may be sharing their expertise with others).

Rick Ginsberg and Tom Thompson (1993) note that principal evaluation is inherently difficult because the nature of principals' work is complex, ambiguous, and highly contextual. As the roles and responsibilities of the principalship continue to evolve and change, principal evaluation must, at the same time and at the same pace, evolve and change.

Conceptual Framework

The purpose of this qualitative inquiry is to assess the principals' perception of the roles and responsibilities of the K-8 Illinois public school principal from the perspective of current principals who are part of Generation X. Specifically, why did the principal decide to pursue a principalship at a relatively young age, what are the most rewarding aspects of the principalship, what unique challenges do principals under the age of 35 face, and what supports are necessary for a new principal to retain his or her professional vitality? Two frameworks fit appropriately within this study, Professional Vitality (Harvey, 2003) and the Job Attraction Theory. However, these frameworks will be analyzed within the context of the current research regarding the characteristics of individuals within Generation X.

Generation X

Generation X can be portrayed as brazen free agents, lending the pragmatism and independence to an era of growing social turmoil. [They] come of age in a society strong in choices and judgments but weak in structure, guidance, or any sense of collective mission for young adults. Lacking a generation core, they are defined by their very social and cultural divergence. Aware that elder leaders don't expect much from them as a group, they feel little collective mission or power. Yet their accelerated contact with the real world gives them strong survival skills and expectations of personal success (Erickson, 2009; Strauss & Howe, 1997).

The chart below defines Generation X in simpler terms:

<p>Born: 1965 (or 1961) to 1979</p> <p>Formative teen years: 1980s and early 1990s</p> <p>Age in 2009: twenty-nine to forty-three (or forty-eight) years old</p>

(Erickson, 2009)

Figure 1. Definition of Generation X

The 51 million members of Generation X, born between 1965 and 1976, grew up in a very different world than previous generations. Divorce and working moms created "latchkey" kids out of many in this generation. This led to traits of independence, resilience and adaptability (Thielfoldt & Scheef, 2004). These environmental factors have played a role in developing qualities and attributes that are consistent amongst members of the workforce who belong to Generation X.

Members of Generation X expect immediate and ongoing feedback, and are equally comfortable giving feedback to others. Other traits include working well in multicultural settings, desire for some fun in the workplace and a pragmatic approach to getting things done. However, the most important factors for success is if employees who are in Generation X are given total responsibility for a specific project along with the tools, information, support, and freedom they need to focus on accomplishing it (Tulgan, 1996). Experience and seniority no longer rule the work place as they have been exchanged for an individual's ability to have a positive attitude and fun while at work (Singer Group, 1999).

Most Gen Xers state that success means following opportunity wherever it takes them. If it keeps them at the same employer, that's fine. If it takes them to different employers, that's fine, too (Tulgan, 2000).

According to a 2001 study (Catalyst, 2001) of 4,500 Generation X employees at 10 organizations, members of Generation X appear to place a much higher priority on personal and family-related goals than on their career-related goals: 84% of the respondents stated that it was extremely important to them to have a loving family, 72% indicated that it was extremely important to have a relationship with a significant other, while 79% responded that it was extremely important to enjoy life. In terms of work-related goals, 22% rated having "a variety of responsibilities" as extremely important, and just 16% of respondents stated that it is extremely important to become an influential leader.

In a more recent study (Delotte, 2009), Generation X is least likely to stay with their current employer (37%) as compared to Generation Y (44%) and Baby Boomers (50%). Of further interest in this study were the findings of the different mindsets that exist between Generation X employees and their colleagues who belong to other generations. For example, with respect to the financial motivators that contribute to a Generation X employee's likelihood of staying in a position, additional bonuses and financial incentives were of the highest priority (48%) whereas 30% of their colleagues who belong to the Baby Boom generation listed this same motivation as their highest priority. Also important to note are the findings that employers do not appear to understand the *non-financial motivators* of Generation X. This is evidenced by the

failure of Generation X employees to rank financial incentives within the top three retention tactics that contribute in their likelihood of remaining in a position with an employer.

All organization, including school districts, must consider these statistics when designing positions that may attract candidate from this particular generation. In combining the traits of Generation X into one profile, members of this generation are independent, adaptable, and willing to pursue new opportunities. Members of Generation X work best when they're given the desired outcome and then turned loose to figure out how to achieve it. This means a mentor should guide them with feedback and suggestions, not step-by-step instructions (Thielfoldt & Scheef, 2004).

Therefore, school districts must have job descriptions for the principalship that will keep Generation X principals interested in their position by allowing them to make decisions, use their creativity, and learn new skills while providing feedback in a timely and ongoing manner. Additionally, Superintendents must possess an understanding that members of Generation X are more motivated by personal satisfaction than they are by money.

Professional Vitality

It is clear throughout the literature that the roles and responsibilities of the principalship are changing. The job of a principal requires an individual to possess the ability to stay focused on being an effective instructional leader without letting the pressures and challenges of the principalship get in the way of doing the job well. The existing research on Generation X indicates that members of this generation are resilient,

independent, creative, and possess the ability to problem solver (Thielfoldt & Scheef, 2004). These generational characteristics mirror many of the qualities presented within the definition of professional vitality. This study will use professional vitality as the primary framework for understanding the perceptions of the principals participating in the study.

Although there is a significant amount of literature that discusses the principal shortage, the challenges of the principalship, and the stress factors of the principalship, Harvey and Donaldson (2003) suggest looking at the principalship from a more positive perspective. They contend this may be done by taking a look at what works for principals in helping them handle the stress and subsequently, “reinforcing what makes the principalship fulfilling both personally and professionally” (Donaldson & Harvey, 2003, p. 30). To this end, they use the construct of “professional vitality” which presents an “optimistic and hopeful way to think about the modern-day principal” (p. 30).

Professional vitality consists of *passion*, *vigor*, *facility*, and *satisfaction*. Donaldson and Harvey (2003) explain *passion* as a “strong inner sense of purpose”. *Vigor* is having the mental, physical and emotional energy to do the job. *Facility* is defined as the “skill at the job” or “savvy” and *satisfaction* is described as a “sense of pleasure, accomplishment, and fulfillment” (p. 30). Donaldson and Harvey contend that principals who have a sense of high professional vitality will experience lower levels of stress. They suggest that professional developers look for ways to “reinforce a principal’s passion, vigor, facility, and satisfaction” (p. 32). Further, the motivation derived from being professionally vital may contribute to persistence in the job.

The nature of motivation revolves around the energy and persistence leading to productiveness and the mobilization of others to act (Deci & Ryan, 2000). A variety of definitions of motivation are presented in the literature. Motivation can be defined as the desire to achieve a goal (Hays & Hill, 2000). Definitions provided by Kunz and Pfaff (2002) explain motivation as a behavior a person chooses because it makes him or her feel competent and self-directed.

Motivation is also described as the joy a person derives from performing a task or being completely absorbed in the activity (Kunz & Pfaff, 2002). Deci and Ryan (2000) present two types of motivation, intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is defined as the “inherent tendency to seek out novelty and challenges, to extend and exercise one’s capacities, to explore, and to learn” (p. 70). This type of motivation requires no specific rewards because it is a source of enjoyment and vitality in one’s life. An environment that fosters a sense of competence and autonomy enhances intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation deals with performing an activity in order to attain an outcome. For example, a person earns a paycheck for the work he or she performs. However, extrinsic motivation can also be internalized and integrated such that carrying out a task becomes meaningful and satisfying and, subsequently, becomes more of a behavior from within the person rather than from the external social context (Deci & Ryan, 2000). For example, in the current environment of high stakes testing, a principal may feel more motivated if he or she feels valued, recognized and respected, for the manner in which he or she leads the school in pursuit of high achievement on the test, rather than being recognized simply for the test scores alone. Thus, even in the face of

the seemingly daunting challenges of NCLB and state requirements, a principal can internalize the behaviors of a positive attitude, dedication, and determination to stay the course. Thus, professionally vital principals possess the energy and motivation necessary for moving forward, being productive, staying positive, and consequently, experience enjoyment and fulfillment in the job.

As presented in the introduction, the position of school principal is becoming increasingly more complex and demanding. The literature in the field is also filled with ideas and strategies for coping with stress in the principalship (Allison, 1997; Fields, 2005; Metzger, 2003) and further informs those who work in principal certification programs on how to provide prospective administrators with tools for their future work as principals. While considerable research in the area of principal burnout, stress, and their work and experiences exists, there is little current research on the present challenges and stressors facing principals and how they cope given the rigorous accountability expectations of today's educational environment. Further, there is a lack of current research that addresses the experience of principals who choose to remain in their positions and their reasons for staying the course. Likewise, there is little research that seeks to look at the principalship through an alternative lens such as that presented by Harvey and Donaldson (2003). Therefore, this study will use the construct of professional vitality to frame the discussion of principals' passion, vigor, facility, and satisfaction in order to learn more about why some principals persist in the job and what conditions exist that may foster professional vitality.

Job Attraction Theory

The Job Attraction Theory, formulated by Rynes and Barber (1990) suggests a redesign of the roles and responsibilities of the principal so that the less desirable aspects of the role are altered. Rynes and Barber identified three primary reasons that one may be attracted to a position:

1. Individual characteristics of the job seeker
2. Attributes of the job
3. Organizational characteristics (conditions of the workplace). (p. 286)

Individuals who belong to Generation X are different than previous generations, who tended to stay within a job, even if they weren't personally satisfied in the position (Erickson, 2009; Strauss & Howe, 1997). Principals, who are members of Generation X, may be willing to move from one principalship to another if their enthusiasm for their current job is lacking. There are sufficient numbers of individuals who are administrator certified and are nominally qualified to assume administrative positions; however, they are not applying for position vacancies because they are not attracted to the job (McAdams, 1998; Winter, Rinehart, & Munoz, 2004).

Through the framework of the Job Attraction Theory, data collected in this study will be used to recommend a course of action for school districts to follow so that the roles and responsibilities of the principal are clear to the next generation of school leaders.

Sergiovanni (2001) concluded that factors such as achievement, recognition, and responsibility had a positive impact on the job satisfaction of teachers, while the factors

of poor interpersonal relationships, incompetent or unfair administrative and supervisory practices, and situations in one's personal life contribute to job dissatisfaction.

The literature clearly points to the primary constructs of both professional vitality and the job attraction theories. The principalship is a demanding job, one in which the job description and responsibilities change on an ongoing basis. Those principals who can sustain their life in the principalship with passion, vigor, and a sense of job satisfaction and fulfillment, according to the literature, will be most likely to continue in their role as principal without leaving the position prematurely.

Summary

The review of relevant research on the principalship, specifically, the history of the principalship, the roles and responsibilities of the principal, principal mentoring and professional development programs, the principal shortage, and principal evaluations indicate the need to identify the perceptions of principals, who enter the position at a young age and therefore have the opportunity to spend a significant portion of their upcoming administrative career in the principalship.

As far back as the 1970's, a U.S. Senate Committee report on Equal Educational Opportunity identified the principal as the single most influential person in a school:

In many ways, the principal is the most important and influential individual in any school. He or she is the person responsible for all activities that occur in and around the school building. It is the principal's leadership that sets the tone of the school, the climate for teaching, the level of professionalism and morale for the teachers, and the degree of concern for what the students may or may not become. The principal is the main link between the community and the school and the way he or she performs in this capacity largely determines the attitudes of parents

and students about the school. If a school is a vibrant, innovative, child-centered place, if it has a reputation for excellence in teaching, if students are performing to the best of their ability, one can almost point to the principal's leadership as the key to success. (p. 56)

Marzano (2003) stated that school leadership could be the single most important aspect of effective school reform. With this, comes an obligation to fully understand the perceptions of education's emerging leaders so that educational leadership, particularly at the building level.

This study is relevant to the administrative profession because it involves principals' perceptions of the principalship from the perspective of K-8 public school principals in Illinois who are under the age of 35. The results of the research, as collected in the Principals' Perception Questionnaire will hopefully inform university preparation programs, continuing education programs, and central office superiors concerning the attitudes and beliefs of the principalship from the perspective of those individuals who have served in the principalship and are of an age that would allow them to remain in the principalship for many years.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

Introduction

Included in the methodology discussion contained within this chapter are the following topics: purpose, research design, sample, procedure for data collection, data analysis, ethical considerations, bias prevention, validity and limitations, and summary.

This qualitative study used the Principals' Perception Questionnaire developed by this researcher as the primary data collection technique. The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) website (www.isbe.net) was contacted via a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to solicit the names and ages of the principals who will be identified as potential participants in this study. The purpose of this qualitative inquiry was to assess the principals' perception of the roles and responsibilities of the K-8 Illinois public school principal from the perspective of current principals who are members of Generation X. As the roles and responsibilities of the public school principal continue to evolve, and with the demand for qualified principals expected to increase in the coming years, the perceptions of the roles of the principal, as perceived by current principals, was explored.

The research questions were developed to explore the principals' perceptions, identify a set of common perceptions regarding the roles and responsibilities of the principal and to better understand what is required to maintain an adequate supply of candidates for the principalship. This study sought to identify the roles and

responsibilities of the principal as perceived by existing Illinois public school K-8 principals who belong to Generation X. The primary research question was *what are the perceptions of Illinois K-8 principals', who belong to Generation X, regarding the public school principalship?*

Specifically, the fundamental research questions were:

1. Why did the principal decide to pursue a principalship at a relatively young age?
2. What are the most rewarding aspects of the principalship?
3. What challenges does the principal face?
4. What supports are necessary for a new principal to retain his or her professional vitality?

Research Design

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of the Illinois public school principal as reported by current kindergarten through eighth grade Illinois principals who are members of Generation X. The City of Chicago District 299 was excluded from this study because of the number of principals within this system who would qualify for this study could skew the results. Since each of the principals would respond to the questionnaire having similar experiences within Chicago Public Schools (support, professional development opportunities, etc.) their data may be overrepresented in this study and, therefore, skew the results.

The principals' participation in the study not only provided a forum in which their perceptions of the principalship were expressed, but their responses provided much needed clarification and guidance when it comes to redefining the role of the principal.

The Principals' Perception Questionnaire (see Appendix A) was intended to provide data that will help better understand the principals' perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of the principalship. Participation in this research was voluntary and there was no penalty for non-participation. All information gathered was used solely for research purposes and was held in strict confidence and has remained anonymous.

Research Strategy

McMillan (2004) states that qualitative researchers try to reconstruct reality as the participants they are studying see it. They do not apply predetermined definitions about how people will feel or react. The goal of qualitative research is to understand participants from their point of view. In other words, the focus is on the meaning of the events, and actions as expressed by the participants. With this approach there are multiple "realities" as different people construct subjective meaning from the same event. As a result, much of what is reported in qualitative studies is participants' perspectives (p. 259).

The primary objective of this study was to understand the individual principal's perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of the principalship. Therefore, it is imperative that information was gathered directly from those most connected with the principalship, principals themselves. Qualitative research was selected because, when conducted appropriately, it allows the researcher to study, analyze, and identify the scope

of the principalship as perceived by the study's participants. It also allows the researcher to identify common themes that may emerge within the participant's responses which will, in turn, allow for a clarification and more defined understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the Illinois public school principalship. This design allowed the study to take place in a comfortable and convenient environment for the participants, the school. Furthermore, the study required approximately ten to fifteen minutes for the principal to complete and included a self-addressed stamped envelope, therefore making it easy for an individual to participate.

The researcher chose to use a qualitative questionnaire design in order to respond to the study's four research questions because it provided the best methodology to not only understand the thoughts of the participants, but to allow for the results of the study to be driven by the responses themselves as opposed to the questions themselves driving the outcome of the study. The questionnaire also provided the most confidential and convenient method for collecting the responses of the participants. Due to the sensitive nature of these responses, it was imperative that the data were gathered in a confidential and safe manner so that the principals could answer in an open and honest manner.

Other qualitative research methodologies were considered. A historical research approach would have provided reliable data for this study; however, a focus on the historical issues surrounding the roles and responsibilities of the public school principalship may have been overrepresented in the participants' responses. Case study research was also considered but this approach was rejected due to the limited data that

would be provided through such a small group of participants (Huberman & Miles, 2002).

Quantitative research design was considered for this study and rejected because it relies primarily on the use of numerical indices to summarize, describe, and explore relationships among traits. There is a reliance on control, statistics, measurement, and statistical reports. These measures would not adequately allow for the collection of data from natural settings (Patton, 2002) using mostly verbal descriptions of the principals' perception of the roles and responsibilities of the Illinois public school principalship.

This researcher designed the Principals' Perception Questionnaire as the primary method for soliciting responses to the primary research questions of this study. A qualitative research questionnaire is appropriate when examining perceptions and conditions within a social setting. Educational settings are particularly appropriate for qualitative studies in that natural settings provide the backdrop for studies as opposed to laboratory style experiments (Hatch, 2002). In this way, "fields of study are not artificial situations in the laboratory but the practices and interactions of the subjects in everyday life" (Flick, 2002, p. 5) which promise data rich with impressions and interpretations of the people involved. The open-ended questions were designed to provide the researcher the opportunity to collect unanticipated responses from the participants while providing a forum for unconditional answers.

The questionnaire was designed for Illinois public school principals who are members of Generation X. The three page questionnaire (see Appendix A) was self-administered by the principal and consisted of two parts (I-II), each with two sections (A-

B), and a total of 15 questions. In Part I, Section A, questions one through four focused on basic demographic information about the respondent. Question one asked the principal to identify his or her gender. Question two asked the principal to select his or her age. Question three asked the principal to select his or her highest level of education. Question four asked the principal to choose a numerical value, from zero to seven or more, to indicate the number of people who reside in the same household as the principal.

Part I, Section B, asked the principals to provide demographic data regarding their experience in the principalship. Question one asked the principals to indicate the number of years that they have served in the principalship. Responses were based on a series of numerical choices from less than one to over nine. Question two asked the principals to identify the number of years that they have served in their current principalship. Like the first question, responses were based on a series of numerical values ranging from less than one to over nine. Question three asked the principals to choose the word that best described the location of their school building: rural, urban, or suburban. Question four asked the principals to state the grade levels that are served within their school building. Question five asked the principals to indicate their current student enrollment.

Part II, Section A, asked the principals to estimate the approximate number of minutes each week that they spend on various job responsibilities. Their choices were classroom observations, student discipline, buildings/grounds issues, parent contact, teacher meetings (team, all-staff), student meetings (IEPs, etc.), administrative meetings, clerical/paperwork, public relations (concerts, events), curriculum development, and personal professional development. The final choice that existed within the question is

“other”. This choice was included as a response as an additional way for principals to provide responses that this researcher may not have anticipated or expected.

Part II, Section B, provided principals with the opportunity to respond to open-ended questions on the questionnaire. Question one asked principals why they decided to pursue the principalship. Question two asked the principals to state what the most rewarding aspects of the principalship are. Question three asked principals to identify their biggest professional challenges as a principal. Question four asked the principals to identify their biggest personal challenges as a principal. Question five asked the principals to identify the personal and professional supports that are necessary in order to retain their professional vitality for the principalship. Since participants in this study may have been unfamiliar with the term professional vitality, a definition of the term was written directly under question five. Furthermore, a more detailed description of professional vitality was included in the Principals’ Perception Questionnaire Consent Letter.

There were not any markings or other identifier on the questionnaires so that confidentiality for each principal respondent was ensured. Confidentiality of the participants must be assured as the primary safeguard against unwanted exposure (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Informal Focus Group

An informal focus group reviewed a draft of the cover letter and self-administered three page questionnaire on Monday, March 16, 2009 to determine whether the questions could be asked as developed. Group discussion produces data and insights that would be

less accessible without interaction found in a group setting- listening to others' verbalized experiences stimulates memories, ideas, and experiences in participants. This is also known as the group effect where group members engage in "a kind of 'chaining' or 'cascading' effect; talk links to, or tumbles out of, the topics and expressions preceding it (Lindoff & Taylor, 2002). The focus group was comprised of eleven individuals. Of the participants in the focus group, only one would qualify for participation in this study as this individual was the only member who is a current Illinois public school principal in a kindergarten through eighth grade building and who also is age thirty five or younger. Members of the focus group were given a draft of the cover letter and the questionnaire. They were then asked to read the cover letter and respond to the questions contained within the questionnaire. The focus group provided the researcher with valuable information regarding the clarity of the cover letter and the wording of the questions within the questionnaire. Based on the feedback obtained from the focus group, the following changes were made:

Cover Letter:

- Changed the formatting of the letter so that the definition of professional vitality is in a separate paragraph from the introduction of the questionnaire.
- Included the approximate amount of time that is necessary to complete the questionnaire.

Questionnaire:

- Changed Part 2, Section A, Question 1 so that participants were asked to provide an estimation of the amount of time in minutes each week instead of a percentage of time each month.
- Italicized and bolded two words, professional and personal, in Part 2, Section B, Questions 3 and 4.
- Added the words “personal and professional” to Part 2, Section B, Question 5.

The feedback obtained from the members of this focus group was used to ensure clarity and consistency within the questions. Data collected from this focus group were used to ensure that the questions, as written, were going to obtain the data that was intended by the researcher. The data collected from the informal focus group will not be included within the results of this study. The revised cover letter is found in Appendix B and the final revision of the Principals’ Perception Questionnaire is found in Appendix A.

Research Process

The cover letter, Principals’ Perception Questionnaire, and a self-addressed stamped envelope were mailed to Generation X principals at their Illinois K-8 public school’s address (n=2,840). The researcher chose not to include principals from the City of Chicago School District 299 due to the number of principals within that organization that would qualify for this study. Their data, if included, may have skewed the data by having a disproportionate number of participants from one school district included within the results of the study.

The cover letter (see Appendix A) stated the purpose of the study and addresses three ethical demands according to Marshall and Rossman (2006):

- (a) that participants understand (have explained to them) that this is a research study with specific parameters and interest; (b) that they (participants) are free to participate or not without prejudice; and (c) that their identities will be masked (protected). (p. 90)

The questionnaire only took 15 minutes of the principals' time to complete it; therefore, making it the most efficient and non-obtrusive method for data collection. In addition, since neither the questionnaire itself nor the self-addressed stamped envelope included with the questionnaire, contained any identifying information, this method further ensured confidentiality amongst the participants. All participants were sent a reminder post card after three weeks of the initial mailing (see Appendix E).

This researcher considered distributing the Principals' Perception Questionnaire in an electronic format (e-mail), but rejected this option due to the possibility that the e-mail would not be opened, thus, not receive a response. If the data collected for this study had been provided through electronic means, it is possible that a bias would have been present: only principals, who were proficient in the use of technology, and comfortable with providing confidential information over the internet, would have responded.

Sample

Purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling (Polit & Hunglar, 1999, p. 284). With this type, the sample is "hand-picked" for the research. The primary source to provide information regarding the individuals who were chosen to participate in this study was the:

- Illinois State Board of Education
- Illinois Principals' Association

The Illinois State Board of Education has received a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) (see Appendix C) request so that the researcher can identify current Illinois public school K-8 principals who are members of Generation X. The process for obtaining this information can be found in Appendix D. Participants received a mailing containing both the cover letter and the questionnaire. Those individuals who chose not to participate in this study were asked to return the survey in the included self-addressed stamped envelope. Once questionnaire responses were returned to the researcher, they were kept in a secure location to ensure that only the researcher was able to access the information contained within. It was the hope that at least 45 principals will return the questionnaire for a minimum of a 20% return rate which was considered viable (Miles & Huberman, 2002).

Procedure for Collecting Data

The sole source of data collection for this study was the Principals Perception Questionnaire Concerning the Roles and Responsibilities of the K-8 Principal

The researcher mailed a cover letter (see Appendix B), the self-administered questionnaire to the principals (see Appendix A) to their respective schools, and a self-addressed and stamped return envelope to return the completed questionnaire to the researcher. A reminder post card was sent to the principals in the event that they did not respond within the given period of time.

The cover letter stated the following information prior to the principal's completing the questionnaire:

- Background information
- Research information
- Procedure for the study
- Objectives of the study
- Confidentiality and anonymity assurances
- Voluntary nature of the study
- Consent information

The researcher assumed consent with the completion and receipt of the principals' perception questionnaire.

Principals were asked to complete the questionnaire and return it to the researcher by January 29, 2010. In the event that a principal chose not to participate in the study, they were asked to return the blank questionnaire to the researcher using the self-

addressed stamped envelope provided. All questionnaires, completed and blank, were destroyed upon completion and acceptance of this study.

To best aggregate and analyze the data collected in the questionnaire, responses were coded. Each respondent was given a code, for example, principal 1, and all of that principal's responses were coded using the numerical value, 1. This aided the researcher in linking responses to each question to a participant.

Part 1, Section A												
1	Gender	Male	Female									
2	Age	<27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35		
3	Bachelors	Masters	Specialist	Doctorate	Post-Doctorate							
4		1	2	3	4	5	6	7+				
Part 1, Section B												
1	Less than 1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9+		
2	Less than 1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9+		
3	Rural	Urban	Suburban									
4	Open Ended											
5	Open Ended											
Part 2, Section A												
1	Class. Obs.	Disc.	Bld/Grnd.	Parent	Tchr. Mtg.	Std. Mtg.	Admn. Mtg.	Paper	PR	Cur. Dev.	PD	Other
Part 2, Section B												
1												
2												
3												
4												
5												

Figure 2. Sample Data Collection Grid

Data Analysis

The first step in qualitative analysis is to create a thorough and comprehensive description of the issue being studied. Geertz (1973) and Denzin (1978) call this 'thick' description. If 'thin' description merely states 'facts', a 'thick' description includes information about the context of an act, the intentions and meanings that organize action, and its subsequent evolution (Denzin, 1978).

The process for analyzing the responses to the Principals' Perception Survey was to first determine the demographic, or descriptive, statistics. Then, the researcher determined how the responses fit within the conceptual framework of this study. Next, the researcher identified responses that fit within the themes of the literature review. Finally, the researcher discussed any responses that can be considered as outliers.

Once the responses for the questionnaire were received, the researcher will use a Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet to log, code, and manage the raw data. Response data was categorized into two themes; responses that fall within the category of the professional vitality framework and those responses that fall within the job attraction theory framework. The researcher used a coding process while categorizing the response data. [Qualitative researchers] use the coding process to generate a description of the setting or people as well as categories or themes for analysis (Creswell, 2008).

Additionally, the researcher identified a set of themes that emerged from the data, and through those themes and further connection to the themes presented in the literature review, further analyzed the data to see what, if any, trends could be identified regarding

the roles and responsibilities of the Illinois K-8 public school principal as perceived by the principals included in the sample pool.

Through the use of inductive data analysis (Huberman & Miles, 2002), the researcher build thematic patterns, categories, and themes from the response data by organizing the data into increasingly more complex units of information, from rather broad themes, in an effort to establish a comprehensive list of themes that can then be placed into this study's theoretical frameworks - Generation X in the workplace, the Job Attraction Theory and the Professional Vitality Theory.

Ethical Considerations and Minimization of Bias

A number of steps were taken to ensure an ethical and even-handed approach was kept through the course of this study. First, each principal was contacted by the researcher via a cover letter which introduced the researcher, the purpose of the study, and the Principals' Perception Questionnaire, and a deadline for submission of the responses. The participants received a postcard shortly before the deadline that reminded them to complete the questionnaire within the designated amount of time.

To further ensure that this study was done in an ethical manner, participants were given notice that their participation in the study a) was voluntary and b) was kept under the strictest of confidentiality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Respondents were also made aware, through the cover letter, that participation was voluntary and that all questionnaires that will not be completed could be returned to the researcher via the included self-addressed stamped envelope. No part of the envelope, mailing list, or the questionnaire itself contained any identifying markers as to ensure the anonymity of the

participants in the study. Upon conclusion of the study, all questionnaires, both completed and incomplete, were destroyed.

To prevent any of the researcher's own biases from contaminating the data, the researcher kept a journal of personal thoughts and opinions throughout the entire research process. The journal allowed the researcher a forum to contemplate the data, the meaning of the data, and the results that were uncovered through the analysis of the responses to the questionnaire. Experienced researchers discuss their practice of writing notes to themselves as an integral part of the research process (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). These notes are variously referred to as a diary, a journal, or as memos, and contain the researcher's personal record of insights, beginning understandings, working hunches, recurring words or phrases, ideas, questions, thoughts, concerns and decisions made in the research process (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994).

Validity and Reliability

The issues regarding the validity and reliability of this study were always considered. Trustworthiness, or validity, suggests that the researcher is measuring exactly what is intended to be measured - what Creswell (2003) labels "verification". It deals with the credibility of the study and outcomes (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Lecompte and Goetz (1982) state:

Establishing validity requires determining the extent to which conclusions effectively represent empirical reality and assessing whether constructs devised by the researchers represent or measure the categories of human experiences that occur. (p. 32)

Qualitative questionnaires tend to be weak in validity and strong on reliability as the participants' actual feelings and physical responses to the questionnaire cannot be fully replicated through the written word. And, although participants were asked to respond to the questionnaire in an open and honest manner, their responses may not be accurate reflections of their actual feeling as they may only respond in socially and professionally acceptable manners. The principalship may be a very high profile position so responses to this researcher's questions may be considerate of this factor.

McMillan (2004) explains that it is best to collect evidence for validity in a pretest or pilot test (pp. 172-173). The questionnaire that was piloted with the informal focus group on March 16, 2009 helped determine whether or not the questions contained within the questionnaire could be asked and answered as written. Feedback from this informal focus group, made up of 14 doctoral students at Loyola University Chicago, provided the information necessary for the researcher to ensure that the questionnaire was clear and appropriate for obtaining data related to the objective of this study.

Since the Principals' Perception Questionnaire was self-administered, issues regarding its reliability were minimized as every participant was provided with the exact same survey and was given an undetermined amount of time to respond to the questions. The researcher was able to remain objective in the analysis of the response data as the researcher did not get as close to those under study as does the case-study researcher and therefore was less likely to be corrected by the study objects 'talking back' (Seale, 2004).

Limitations

The following limitations of this study were considered:

1. This study excluded Chicago Public School District 299 from the research.

The researcher chose not to include this school district due to the number of principals eligible for participation in the study who work within this school system. Their responses, if included, could have altered the data by introducing many perspectives of the principalship all from the same school system.

2. This study was only conducted in elementary and middle public school districts. Data collected in high schools or private schools may not have revealed the same results.

3. The researcher was not on-site when each questionnaire is being completed. Therefore, questions regarding the meaning of certain items on the questionnaire were not answered.

The design of this study was most appropriate due to two primary factors; the number of participants in this study was large making a mailed questionnaire the most efficient way to gather data from the participants, and, the nature of the questions in the survey could have preclude a respondent from being open and honest if the questions were presented in an interview format.

Summary

This chapter presented the rationale for the use of the quantitative method of research to obtain the data required to answer the primary research question of this study: The primary research question was *what are the perceptions of Illinois K-8 principals', who belong to Generation X, regarding the public school principalship?* Specifically, why did the principal decide to pursue a principalship at a relatively young age, what are the most rewarding aspects of the principalship, what challenges do principals face, and what supports are necessary o a new principal to retain his or her professional vitality?

The first part of this chapter provided the purpose of this study and introduced the research questions. Then, discussion of the research procedure, data analysis, ethical considerations, bias prevention, and validity and limitations was discussed.

The researcher is hopeful, that through this study, a better understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the principalship, as well as ways to support them, as perceived by the new generation of school administrators, have been identified.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF DATA

The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine the changing face of the principalship through the perceptions of Illinois public school principals who belong to Generation X. This study will also identify the reasons for which these principals left the classroom for a career in educational leadership. The primary research question is *what are the perceptions of Illinois K-8 principals', who belong to Generation X, regarding the public school principalship?*

Specifically, the fundamental research questions are:

1. Why did the principal decide to pursue a principalship at a relatively young age?
2. What are the most rewarding aspects of the principalship?
3. What challenges does the principal face?
4. What supports are necessary for a new principal to retain his or her professional vitality?

Chapter IV is intended to display the data gathered from both the quantitative and qualitative analysis of responses to the Generation X Principals Perception Questionnaire Concerning the Roles and Responsibilities of the K-8 Principal that were distributed to 2,453 Illinois K-8 principals.

Review of the Procedure

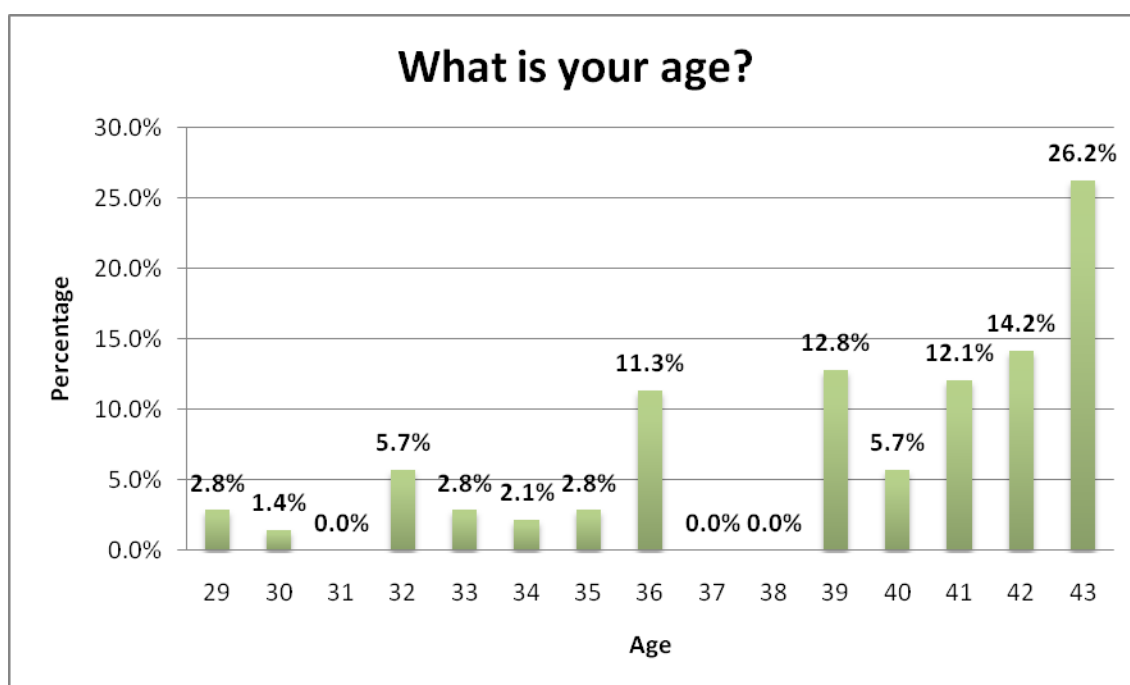
The researcher sent a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) to the Illinois State Board of Education requesting the ages of every existing K-8 public school principal within the State of Illinois. The State Board of Education was unable to provide the researcher with the requested data regarding the age of current principals; however, was able to provide the school name, address, and grade levels of each K-8 school building in Illinois. Therefore, it was impossible for the researcher to determine which principals were members of Generation X. In order to give each Generation X principal an opportunity to respond to the questionnaire, and to ensure the anonymity of the respondents, the researcher mailed the survey to every principal in Illinois. Two weeks after this survey was mailed to the principals, a reminder post card was sent with a request to complete and return the survey if the principal qualified to participate in this study and if he or she had yet to return the survey to the researcher's PO Box.

At the conclusion of the window of time that the researcher provided for the return of the questionnaires, 142 responses had been completed and returned. Since the researcher was unable to determine the exact number of principals who are members of Generation X, it is impossible to identify the return rate for this study. So, for the purposes this study, the perceptions of 142 responses received will be displayed and analyzed. All percentages displayed come from the total (n=142) respondents except when noted otherwise.

Design of the Qualitative Questionnaire

Demographic Data

Part 1 of the Principals Perception Questionnaire was designed to collect demographic data from the respondents. Item 1, 2, 3, and 4 asked the principals to provide their gender, age, highest level of education, and the number of people, including the principal, who lived in his or her household.



(n=142)

Figure 3. Age

As seen in Figure, the largest percentage of respondents was 43 years of age (n=37) and the smallest percentage of respondents were 31, 37, and 38 (n=0) years of age. Additionally, equal percentages of respondents were 29, 33, and 35 years of age (n=4) and 32 and 40 years of age (n=8). Other responses we provided by participants 30

years of age (n=2), 34 years of age (n=3), 36 years of age (n=16), 39 years of age (n=18), 41 years of age (n=17), and 42 years of age (n=20).

Gender Data

Two-thirds of the participants (n=92) in this study (see Figure 4) were male while one-third (n=50) of the participants were female.

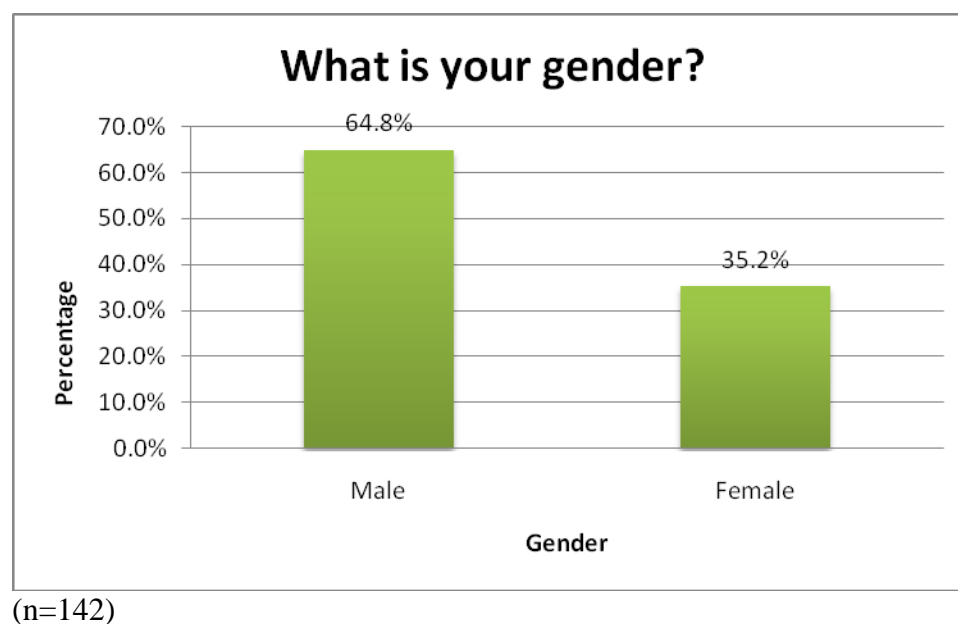
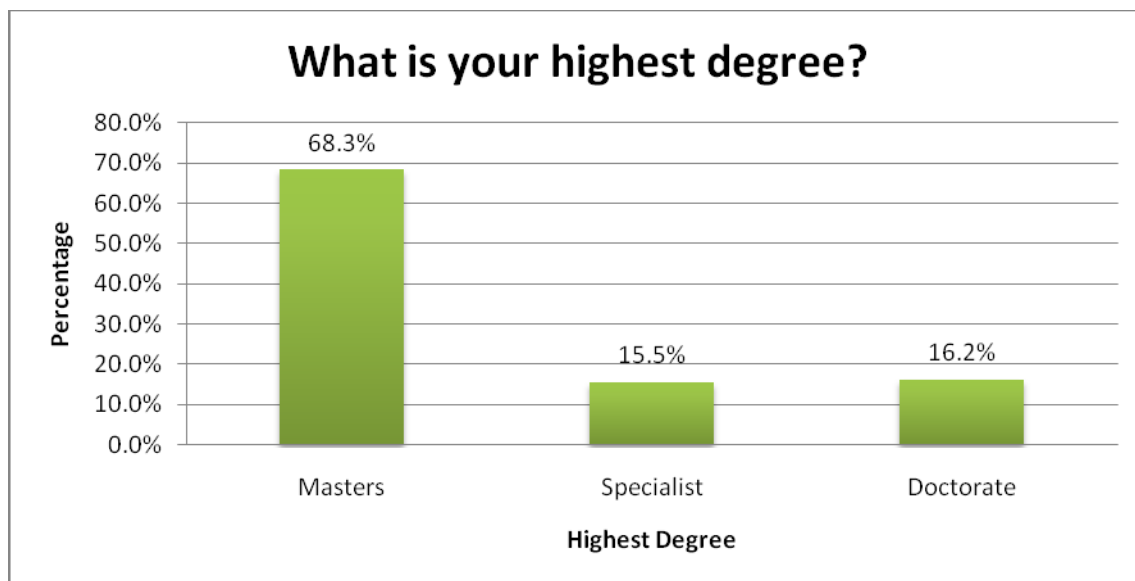


Figure 4. Gender

Educational Background

Of the respondents to the Principals Perception Questionnaire, the majority of responses indicate the highest level of education was a Masters degree (n=97) (see Figure 5). An almost equal number of respondents indicated their highest level of education was either a Doctorate (n=23) or an Education Specialist degree (n=22).

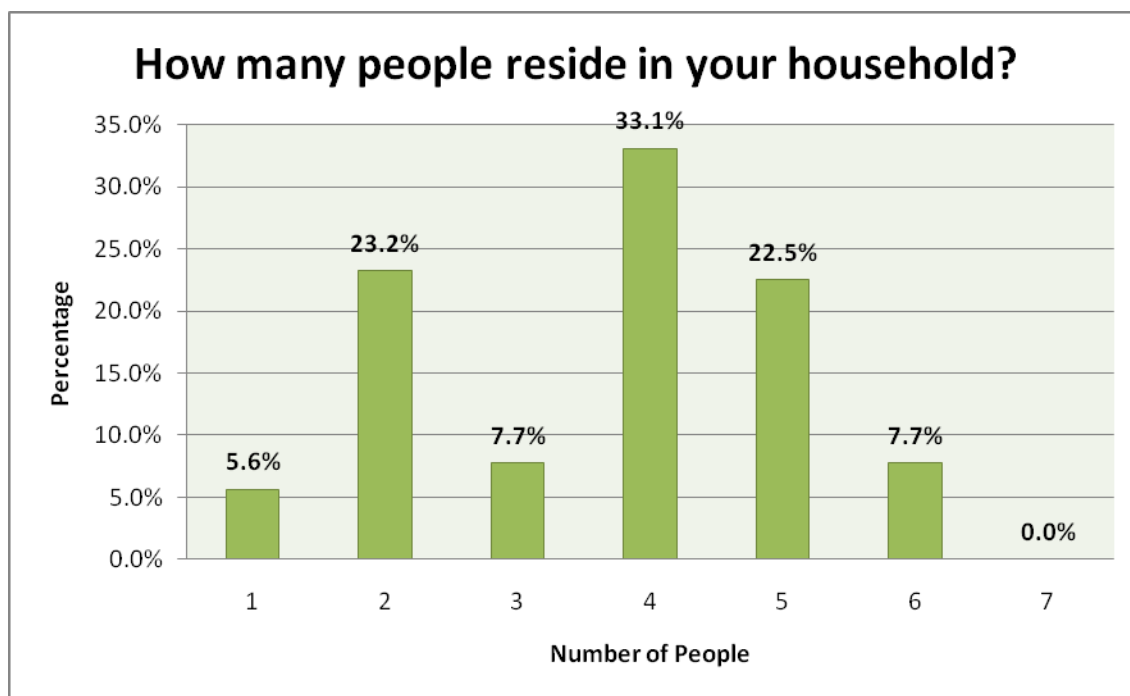


(n=142)

Figure 5. Educational Background

Household Data

Question number 4 in Part 1 asked participants to indicate the number of people who resided within their household. The majority of responses (n=47) stated that four people lived within the principal's household. The next largest response was that two people lived in the same household as the principal (n=33), followed by five people (n=32), three and six people (n=11), and one person (n=8). No participants stated that seven or more individuals lived in their households. Figure 6 represents these responses.

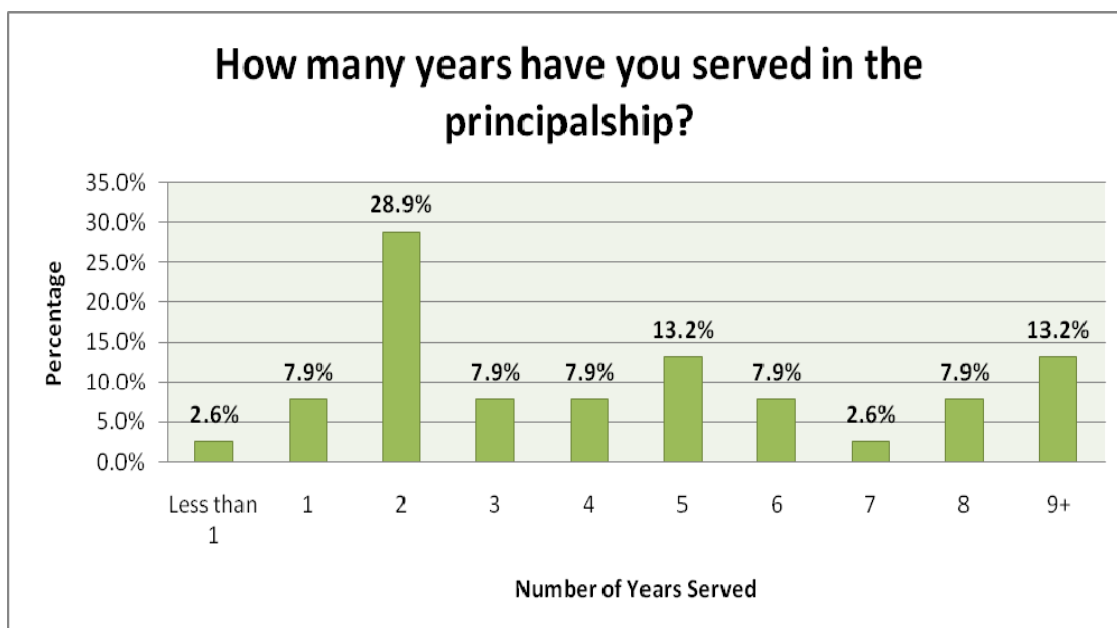


(n=142)

Figure 6. Household Data

Total Years of Experience in the Principalship

Question 1 in Part 1, Section B, asked respondents to state the total number of years that they have spent as a K-8 principal. The smallest percentage of respondents have been principals for less than one year or seven years (n=3). An equal number of respondents indicated one, three, four, six and eight years served in the principalship (n=8) and five and nine years in the principalship (n=11). Most respondents stated two years in the principalship (n=42) in response to this item. The data is shown in Figure 7.

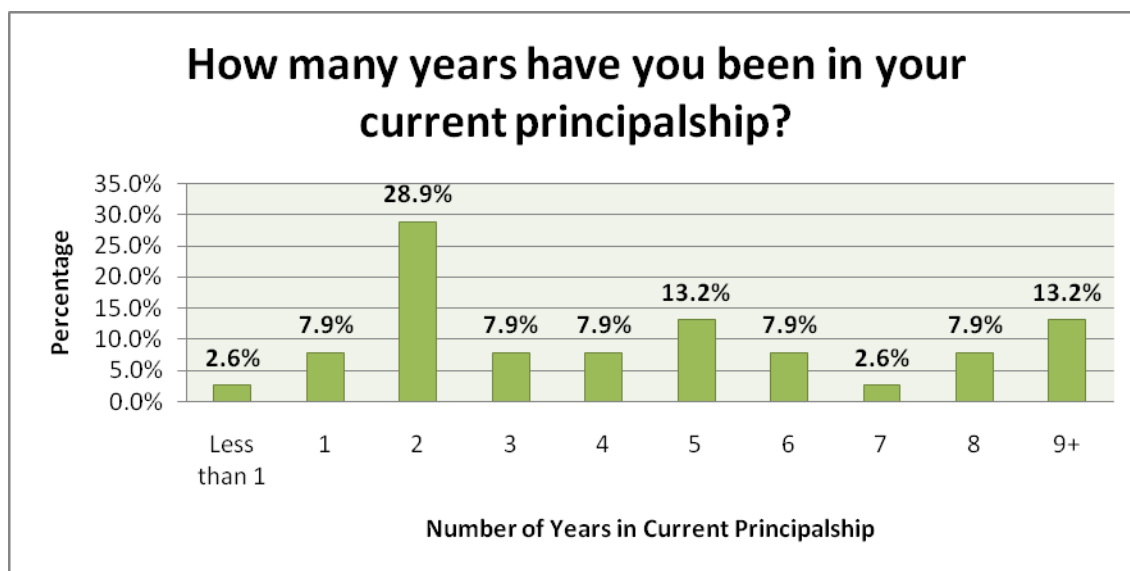


(n=142)

Figure 7. Total Years of Experience in the Principalship

Number of Years in Current Principalship

Part 1, Section B, Question 2 asked participants to indicate the total number of years in their current principalship. The largest number of respondents indicated serving two years in their current principalships (n=41). The results are displayed below (Figure 8):

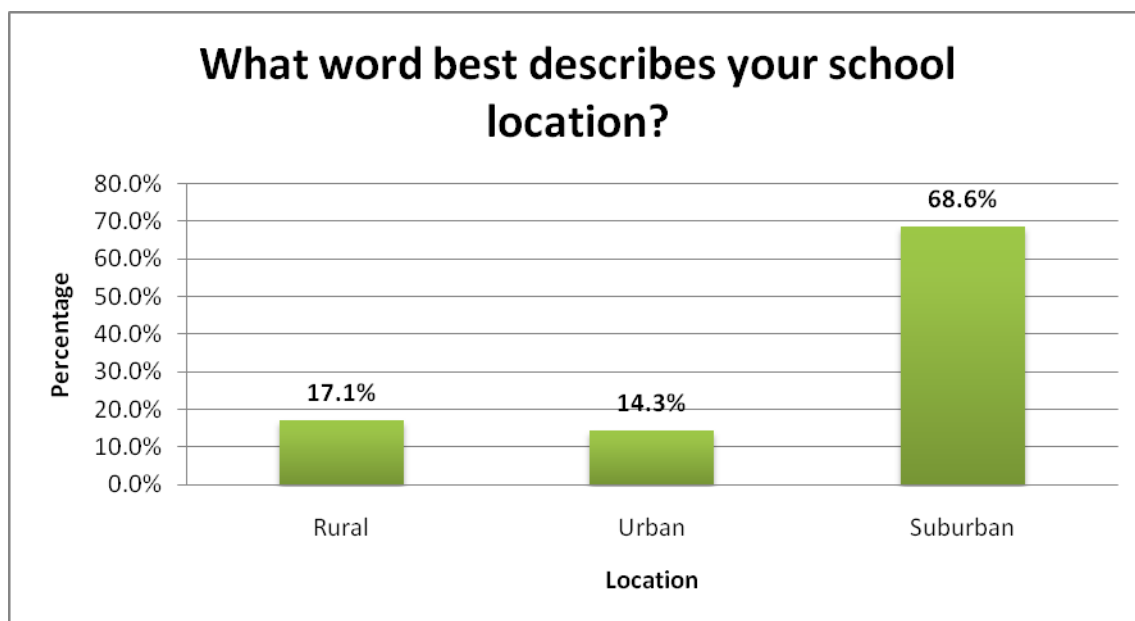


(n=142)

Figure 8. Total Number of Years in Current Principalship

School Setting

Part 1, Section B, Question 3 asked questionnaire respondents to indicate the school location, suburban, urban, or rural, that best describes their current school setting. The largest number of responses came from principals in suburban schools (n=97). The next largest number of responses came from principals in rural settings (n=24). The fewest number of responses came from principals in urban schools (n=20). The data is displayed below (see Figure 9).

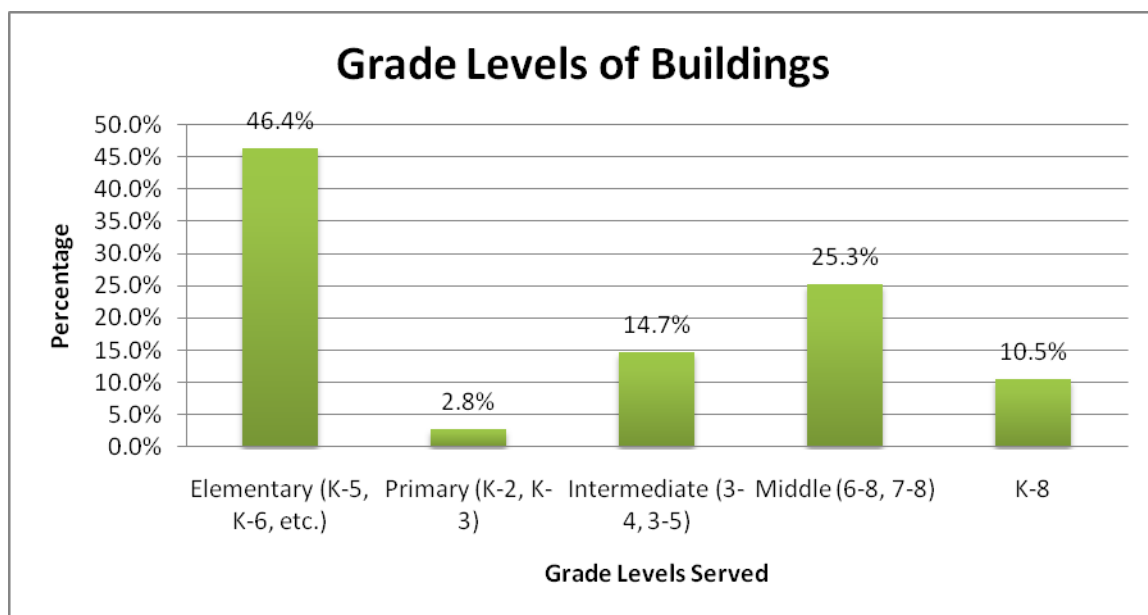


(n=142)

Figure 9. School Setting

Grade Levels of School Building

Part 1, Section B, Question 4 asked principals participating in this study to state the grade level that his or school serves. The largest number of responses came from Elementary principals (n=66), followed by Middle School principals (n=36), Intermediate principals (n=21), K-8 principals (n=15), and Primary principals (n=4). Responses are shown below in Figure 10.

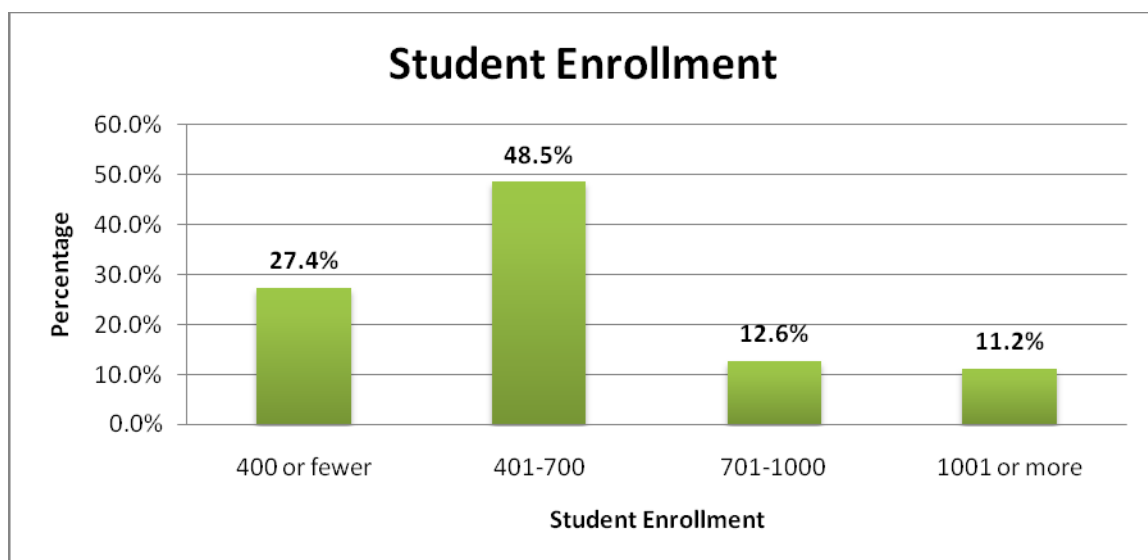


(n=142)

Figure 10. Grade Levels Served

Size of School by Student Enrollment

Part 1, Section B, Question 5 asked principals participating in this study to state the number of students that his or her school serves. The largest number of responses were from principals with 401-700 students in the school building (n=69), followed by 400 or fewer students (n=39), 701-1000 (n=18), and 1001 or more (n=16). Responses are shown below in Figure 11.



(n=142)

Figure 11. Student Enrollment

Time Spent Each Week Completing Tasks

Part 2, Section A of the Principals' Perception Questionnaire asked respondents to indicate the amount of time, in minutes, that are spent on the following tasks: classroom observation, student discipline, buildings/grounds issues, parent contact, teacher meetings (team, staff), student meetings (IEPs, etc.), administrative meetings, clerical/paperwork/e-mails, public relations (concerts, events), curriculum development, and personal professional development.

Table 1

Average Number of Minutes Reported by all Respondents (n=142)

Task	Average Minutes per	Range of Minutes per
	Week	Week
a. Classroom Observations (CO)	183	30-600 minutes
b. Student Discipline (SD)	151	5-600 minutes
c. Buildings/Grounds Issues (BG)	53	5-120 minutes
d. Parent Contact (PC)	149	5-600 minutes
e. Teacher Meetings (team, staff) (TM)	154	5-600 minutes
f. Student Meetings (IEPs, etc.) (SM)	79	0-300 minutes
g. Administrative Meetings (AM)	141	60-420 minutes
h. Clerical/Paperwork (CP)	542	30-1305 minutes
i. Public Relations (concerts, events) (PR)	136	20-600 minutes
j. Curriculum Development (CD)	86	0-240 minutes
k. Personal Professional Development (PD)	81	0-600 minutes
l. Other (e-mails, lunch duty, planning, etc.) (OT)	148	90-600 minutes

Table 2 displays the average number of minutes spent on the tasks presented in Part 2, Section A by the gender of the respondent.

Table 2

Average Minutes Each Week Spent on Tasks by Gender

Task	Male	Range	Female	Range
a. Classroom Observations	155	30-200	244	180-600
b. Student Discipline	155	5-600	129	60-190
c. Buildings/Grounds Issues	56	5-150	50	20-120
d. Parent Contact	168	5-210	162	120-600
e. Teacher Meetings (team, staff)	175	5-600	142	30-480
f. Student Meetings (IEPs, etc.)	94	0-240	86	30-300
g. Administrative Meetings	180	5-600	108	30-120
h. Clerical/Paperwork	396	120-600	341	30-600
i. Public Relations (concerts, events)	168	20-600	112	30-240
j. Curriculum Development	76	0-90	88	60-240
k. Personal Professional Development	45	0-300	110	20-600
l. Other (e-mails, lunch duty, planning, etc.)				
	132	90-300	106	120-600
Total	1800	N/A	1678	N/A

The highest number of minutes reported for the number of minutes each week spent on classroom observations was 200 for males and 600 for females. The lowest response for this task was 30 for males and 180 for females. The highest number of minutes reported for the number of minutes each week spent on student discipline was 600 for males and 190 for females. The lowest response for this task was 5 for males and

60 for females. The highest number of minutes reported for the number of minutes each week spent on buildings/grounds issues was 150 for males and 120 for females. The lowest response for this task was 5 for males and 20 for females. The highest number of minutes reported for the number of minutes each week spent on parent contact was 210 for males and 600 for females. The lowest response for this task was 5 for males and 120 for females. The highest number of minutes reported for the number of minutes each week spent on teacher meetings was 600 for males and 480 for females. The lowest response for this task was 5 for males and 30 for females. The highest number of minutes reported for the number of minutes each week spent on student meetings was 240 for males and 300 for females. The lowest response for this task was 0 for males and 30 for females. The highest number of minutes reported for the number of minutes each week spent on administrative meetings was 600 for males and 120 for females. The lowest response for this task was 5 for males and 30 for females. The highest number of minutes reported for the number of minutes each week spent on clerical/paperwork was 600 for males and 600 for females. The lowest response for this task was 120 for males and 30 for females. The highest number of minutes reported for the number of minutes each week spent attending public relations type events was 600 for males and 240 for females. The lowest response for this task was 20 for males and 30 for females. The highest number of minutes reported for the number of minutes each week spent on curriculum development was 90 for males and 240 for females. The lowest response for this task was 0 for males and 60 for females. The highest number of minutes reported for the number of minutes each week spent on personal professional development was 300 for

males and 600 for females. The lowest response for this task was 0 for males and 20 for females. The highest number of minutes reported for the number of minutes each week spent on other items (e-mails, duties, etc.) was 300 for males and 600 for females. The lowest response for this task was 90 for males and 120 for females.

Table 3 displays the average number of minutes spent on the tasks presented in Part 2, Section A by the highest degree of the respondent.

Table 3

Average Minutes Spent on Task by Highest Degree

Task	Doctorate	Range	Specialist	Range	Masters	Range
a. CO	170	60-220	102	30-180	209	60-240
b. SD	69	30-120	159	90-280	164	105-240
c. BG	60	10-90	59	20-75	52	15-75
d. PC	84	120-220	83	45-180	211	60-240
e. TM	227	180-600	90	45-180	167	5-300
f. SM	113	90-300	66	20-150	93	0-240
g. AM	111	60-300	146	90-210	173	45-180
h. CP	144	60-300	462	210-1305	418	300-500
i. PR	163	60-240	234	120-600	124	45-180
j. CD	140	50-240	89	60-120	74	0-90
k. PD	43	30-90	24	0-60	83	45-600
l. OT	60	30-90	75	90-120	164	120-240
Total	1334	N/A	1604	N/A	1932	N/A

The highest number of minutes spent on classroom observation that was reported was 220 for principals with a Doctoral degree, 180 for principals with a Specialist degree, and 240 for principals with a Masters degree. The lowest number of minutes spent on classroom observation that was reported was 60 for principals with a Doctoral degree, 30 for principals with a Specialist degree, and 60 for principals with a Masters degree. The highest number of minutes spent on student discipline that was reported was 120 for principals with a Doctoral degree, 280 for principals with a Specialist degree, and 240 for

principals with a Masters degree. The lowest number of minutes spent on student discipline that was reported was 30 for principals with a Doctoral degree, 90 for principals with a Specialist degree, and 105 for principals with a Masters degree. The highest number of minutes spent on buildings and grounds issues that was reported was 90 for principals with a Doctoral degree, 75 for principals with a Specialist degree, and 75 for principals with a Masters degree. The lowest number of minutes spent on buildings and grounds issues that was reported was 10 for principals with a Doctoral degree, 20 for principals with a Specialist degree, and 15 for principals with a Masters degree. The highest number of minutes spent making parent contact that was reported was 220 for principals with a Doctoral degree, 180 for principals with a Specialist degree, and 240 for principals with a Masters degree. The lowest number of minutes spent on parent contact that was reported was 120 for principals with a Doctoral degree, 45 for principals with a Specialist degree, and 60 for principals with a Masters degree. The highest number of minutes spent in teacher meetings that was reported was 600 for principals with a Doctoral degree, 180 for principals with a Specialist degree, and 300 for principals with a Masters degree. The lowest number of minutes spent in teacher meetings that was reported was 180 for principals with a Doctoral degree, 45 for principals with a Specialist degree, and 5 for principals with a Masters degree. The highest number of minutes spent in student meetings that was reported was 300 for principals with a Doctoral degree, 150 for principals with a Specialist degree, and 240 for principals with a Masters degree. The lowest number of minutes spent in student meetings that was reported was 90 for principals with a Doctoral degree, 20 for principals

with a Specialist degree, and 0 for principals with a Masters degree. The highest number of minutes spent in administrative meetings that was reported was 300 for principals with a Doctoral degree, 210 for principals with a Specialist degree, and 180 for principals with a Masters degree. The lowest number of minutes spent in administrative meetings that was reported was 60 for principals with a Doctoral degree, 90 for principals with a Specialist degree, and 45 for principals with a Masters degree. The highest number of minutes spent on clerical or paperwork that was reported was 300 for principals with a Doctoral degree, 1305 for principals with a Specialist degree, and 500 for principals with a Masters degree. The lowest number of minutes spent on clerical or paperwork that was reported was 60 for principals with a Doctoral degree, 210 for principals with a Specialist degree, and 300 for principals with a Masters degree. The highest number of minutes spent attending public relations events that was reported was 240 for principals with a Doctoral degree, 600 for principals with a Specialist degree, and 180 for principals with a Masters degree. The lowest number of minutes spent attending public relations events that was reported was 60 for principals with a Doctoral degree, 120 for principals with a Specialist degree, and 45 for principals with a Masters degree. The highest number of minutes spent on curriculum development that was reported was 240 for principals with a Doctoral degree, 120 for principals with a Specialist degree, and 90 for principals with a Masters degree. The lowest number of minutes spent on curriculum development that was reported was 90 for principals with a Doctoral degree, 60 for principals with a Specialist degree, and 0 for principals with a Masters degree. The highest number of minutes spent on personal professional development that was

reported was 90 for principals with a Doctoral degree, 60 for principals with a Specialist degree, and 600 for principals with a Masters degree. The lowest number of minutes spent on personal professional development that was reported was 30 for principals with a Doctoral degree, 0 for principals with a Specialist degree, and 45 for principals with a Masters degree. The highest number of minutes spent on other tasks, including e-mail, that was reported was 90 for principals with a Doctoral degree, 120 for principals with a Specialist degree, and 240 for principals with a Masters degree. The lowest number of minutes spent on other tasks, including e-mail, that was reported was 30 for principals with a Doctoral degree, 90 for principals with a Specialist degree, and 120 for principals with a Masters degree.

Table 4 displays the average number of minutes spent on the tasks presented in Part 2, Section A by the number of people who reside within the household of the respondent.

Table 4

Minutes Spent Each Week on Task by Number of People in Household

Task	1	2	3	4	5	6	7+
a. CO	220	187	273	173	142	217	N/A
b. SD	280	219	80	114	126	123	N/A
c. BG	45	44	80	48	74	53	N/A
d. PC	400	168	60	158	184	113	N/A
e. TM	160	139	160	178	166	170	N/A
f. SM	130	95	150	68	123	47	N/A
g. AM	260	142	207	116	203	200	N/A
h. CP	310	392	233	335	550	353	N/A
i. PR	75	149	90	150	181	190	N/A
j. CD	80	100	80	64	80	97	N/A
k. PD	15	72	220	51	46	53	N/A
l. OT	60	108	220	162	86	0	N/A
Total	2035	1815	1853	1617	1961	1616	N/A

In reviewing the responses to the number of minutes each week spent on the surveyed tasks by the number of people who live in the principal's household, the following trends emerged. In general, principals spend more amounts of time on specific work tasks if they are single, or live with only one other person than principal's who live with two or more people. Principals who are single, or who live alone, spend approximately 2,035 minutes on the tasks surveyed in this questionnaire compared with principals who have six people residing in their household who spend approximately 1,617 minutes each week on the same tasks. Principals who have four and six people, including themselves, living in their household each spend approximately the same amount of time on work tasks each week, 1,616 and 1,617 minutes each respectively.

Principals who have two, three, or five people residing within their households spend roughly the same amount of time on principal tasks; 1,815, 1,853, and 1,961 minutes respectively.

Table 5 displays the average number of minutes spent on the tasks presented in Part 2, Section A by the years of experience in the principalship of the respondent.

Table 5

Minutes Spent Each Week on Tasks by Years of Experience as Principal

Task	<1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9+
a. CO	180	180	120	360	180	218	330	98	90	154
b. SD	600	290	107	240	313	128	127	48	63	129
c. BG	60	25	50	60	70	77	37	38	40	55
d. PC	560	310	163	160	235	173	320	130	40	139
e. TM	180	190	130	160	280	177	110	75	120	175
f. SM	180	130	50	160	80	92	55	63	43	109
g. AM	300	290	123	147	60	139	110	68	300	159
h. CP	180	500	227	640	183	258	513	190	405	420
i. PR	180	135	50	100	107	132	147	195	220	176
j. CD	0	70	57	140	80	92	73	80	55	76
l. PD	120	30	20	260	143	48	10	50	33	54
m. OT	600	0	397	20	0	80	40	113	210	144
Total	3140	2150	1494	2447	1731	1614	1872	1148	1619	1790

In displaying the number of minutes spent on each tasks in terms of the years of experience that a principal has, principals who are in their first year of the principalship spend the most amount of time on work tasks, approximately 3,140 minutes per week. Conversely, principals who participated in this study who had seven years of experience of experience spent the least amount of time on work tasks, 1,148 minutes each week. In order from the highest average number of minutes spent on work tasks to lowest number of minutes spent on work tasks, the following rank applies with regards to experience as a

principal: less than one year (3,140 minutes), three years (2,447 minutes), one year (2,150 minutes), six years (1,872 minutes), nine+ years (1,790 minutes), four years (1,731 minutes), eight years (1,619 minutes), five years (1,614 minutes), and seven years (1,148 minutes).

Table 6 displays the average number of minutes spent on the tasks presented in Part 2, Section A by the current number of years in the current principalship of the respondent.

Table 6

Minutes Spent Each Week on Tasks by Years in Current Principalship

Task	<1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9+
a. CO	180	308	175	340	199	110	199	170	84	170
b. SD	600	183	151	221	142	110	142	146	61	101
c. BG	60	48	56	80	82	33	82	51	70	39
d. PC	560	365	190	229	148	43	148	185	80	93
e. TM	180	275	147	273	164	130	164	142	160	96
f. SM	180	95	84	173	86	42	86	79	117	78
g. AM	300	228	156	184	83	260	83	151	180	150
h. CP	180	500	398	324	365	667	365	393	468	360
i. PR	180	143	110	202	116	200	116	105	57	212
j. CD	0	80	110	97	50	107	50	105	40	97
k. PD	120	38	54	211	40	13	40	49	30	62
l. OT	600	0	211	90	0	80	0	206	400	62
Total	3140	2263	1842	2424	1475	1795	1475	1782	1747	1520

The data regarding the number of minutes spent each week on tasks by the number of years that a principal has been in his/her current principalship shows that principals who have been in their current principalship for less than one year spend the most amount of time on work tasks, 3,140 minutes. Principals who participated in this

study and who have been in their current principalship for either four or six years spend the least number of minutes each week on work tasks, 1,475 minutes. In order from the highest average number of minutes spent on work tasks to lowest number of minutes spent on work tasks, the following rank applies with regards to experience a principal has in his/her current principalship: less than one year (3,140 minutes), three years (2,424 minutes), one year (2,263 minutes), two years (1,842 minutes), five years (1,795 minutes), seven years (1,782 minutes), nine+ years (1,520 minutes, and four and six years (1,475 minutes).

Table 7 displays the average number of minutes spent on the tasks presented in Part 2, Section A by the school setting of the respondent's principalship.

Table 7

Minutes Spent Each Week on Tasks by School Setting

Task	Rural	Suburban	Urban
a. CO	120	181	290
b. SD	165	151	50
c. BG	68	53	50
d. PC	70	192	50
e. TM	56	183	130
f. SM	38	99	90
g. AM	64	173	157
h. CP	463	365	360
i. PR	260	146	80
j. CD	70	79	100
k. PD	20	54	280
l. OT	56	127	20
Total	1450	1803	1657

The data in Table 7 shows that suburban principals who participated in this study spend the most time on work related tasks (1,803 minutes), urban principals spend the second most amount of time on tasks (1,657 minutes), and rural principals spend the fewest number of minutes on work related tasks (1,450 minutes). With regards to each specific task, urban principals spend the most amount of time on classroom observation, curriculum development, and personal professional development. Suburban principals spend the most amount of time on parent contact, teacher meetings, student meetings, administrative meetings, and e-mailing. Rural principals tend to spend the most amount of time on student discipline, buildings and grounds issues, paperwork, and attending public relations related events.

Conversely, suburban principals do not spend less time on any specific task than either urban or rural school districts. Urban principals, as compared to suburban and rural principals in this study, spend the least amount of time on student discipline, buildings and grounds issues, parent contact, attending public relations events, and e-mailing and/or other duties. Rural principals spend the least amount of time on curriculum development, teacher meetings, classroom observations, student meetings, administrative meetings, and personal professional development.

Table 8 displays the average number of minutes spent on the tasks presented in Part 2, Section A by the number of type of school the respondent works within.

Table 8

Minutes Spent Each Week on Tasks by Grade Levels Served

Task	Elementary	Intermediate	K-8	Middle
a. CO	202	220	139	101
b. SD	149	172	124	33
c. BG	52	67	65	78
d. PC	195	136	98	182
e. TM	177	153	63	450
f. SM	103	123	50	228
g. AM	133	133	90	72
h. CP	364	263	393	183
i. PR	122	85	278	162
j. CD	81	80	75	48
k. PD	69	138	43	137
l. OT	130	230	0	153
Total	1777	1800	1418	1827

The data shows that middle school principals tend to spend the most amounts of minutes on work-related tasks, 1,827 minutes. Intermediate principals spend the next highest number of minutes on tasks, 1,800 minutes. Elementary principals spend the third highest number of minutes on the surveyed tasks, 1,777 minutes while K-8 principals spend the fewest number of minutes on the given tasks, 1,418 minutes.

The data shows that elementary principals spend the most amount of time on parent contact, administrative meetings, and curriculum development. Intermediate principals spend the most amount of time on classroom observation, student discipline, administrative meetings, personal professional development, and other tasks including e-mails and duties. Kindergarten through eighth grade principals spend the most amount of time on clerical/paperwork and attending public relations events. Middle school

principals spend the most time on buildings and grounds issues, teacher meetings, and student meetings.

Elementary principals, as compared to the Intermediate, K-8, and Middle School principals in this study spent the least amount of time on buildings and grounds issues. Intermediate principals spend the least amount of the time attending public relations events. Kindergarten through eighth grade principals spend the least amount of time on parent contact, teacher meetings, student meetings, personal professional development, and on other tasks including e-mailing and duties. Middle School principals spend the least amount of time on classroom observation, student discipline, clerical/paperwork, and curriculum development.

Table 9 displays the average number of minutes spent on the tasks presented in Part 2, Section A by the number of students served within the respondent's school.

Table 9

Minutes Spent Each Week on Tasks by Size of Student Population

Task	Less than 400	401-700	701-1000	1001 or more
a. CO	193	349	174	276
b. SD	114	302	134	304
c. BG	66	98	58	48
d. PC	120	359	110	408
e. TM	154	319	186	240
f. SM	87	173	73	208
g. AM	97	265	288	400
h. CP	285	683	616	688
i. PR	120	334	180	108
j. CD	104	113	124	92
k. PD	93	124	44	40
l. OT	79	283	48	340
Total	1512	3402	2035	3152

The data displayed in Table 9 shows that principals who have 400 or fewer students in their school buildings do not spend more time, on average, than principals from the other size groups. Principals of schools with between 400 and 700 students spend the most amount of time on classroom observations, buildings and grounds issues, teacher meetings, attending public relations events, and on personal professional development. Principals of buildings with between 701 and 1,000 students spend the most amount of time on curriculum development. Finally, principals who have more than 1,000 students in their building spend the most amount of time on student discipline, parent contact, student meetings, administrative meetings, clerical/paperwork, and other tasks including e-mails and duty supervisions.

Conversely, the data displayed in Table 9 shows that principals who have 400 or fewer students in their school buildings spend the least amount of time on student discipline, teacher meetings, administrative meetings, and clerical/paperwork. Principals of schools with between 400 and 700 students do not spend the least amount of time on any specific task. Principals of buildings with between 701 and 1,000 students spend the least amount of time on classroom observation, making parent contact, attending student meetings, and on other tasks including e-mails and duties. Finally, principals who have more than 1,000 students in their building spend the least amount of time on buildings and grounds issues, attending public relations events, and on personal professional development.

Open-Ended Responses

Part 2, Section B, of the Principals Perception Questionnaire asked participants to elaborate on five different questions:

- Why did you pursue the principalship?
- What are the most rewarding aspects of the principalship?
- What are your biggest professional challenges as a principal?
- What are your biggest personal challenges as a principal?
- What personal and professional supports do you need in order to retain your professional vitality for the principalship? (*Professional Vitality: the ability to consistently work with passion, vigor, facility, and satisfaction.*)

Instead of presenting all 142 responses to these five open-ended questions, the researcher will provide a sample of responses for each item to reflect the various statements offered by participants. In many instances, responses were very similar, so the researcher will represent such responses one time in this chapter. Additionally, percentages will often exceed 100% as those respondents' answers contained multiple responses.

Why did you pursue the principalship?

The vast majority of responses (97.6%, n=140) to this question were positive with statements reflecting a love or passion for working with children. Participants stated that he or she “loves children” and “I love working with people, working with children, and the opportunity to make a difference.”

Additionally, participants stated a desire to have a positive impact on their schools and in the lives of their students. One respondent stated, “As a teacher, (I) got involved in committees. (I) had a desire to make a difference, (and) be a part of solutions. (I) enjoyed thinking about the school/district as a whole rather than just my classroom. It was an opportunity to impact more students.”

Similarly, another respondent shared, “I felt I was ready to start using the tools I had accumulated in my toolbox. After holding various leadership positions as a teacher-team leader, mentor, union representative, coach - I realized that I could have an even greater impact on students by working with the adults in their lives (parents, teachers, etc.). Based on my experience in the field and the feedback I received from colleagues, I believed I was ready for the challenge.”

Other responses (n=72) to Question 1 in Part 2, Section B, stated that a previous supervisor and/or mentor provided influence in the principal’s interest in pursuing the principalship. “I was encouraged to (be a principal) by a former principal, took some classes, and again was highly encouraged to continue those studies by a professor/Superintendent. I wanted to impact students, teachers, communities, etc. - more than (being a) teacher might be able to,” reported one participant. “I was encouraged by a previous principal to do so. I had been the AP for eight years. We both felt it would be the natural thing to do,” stated another participant. Similarly, another respondent stated, “A great mentor helped me see my strengths and how they align to move a building in the right direction.”

Other responses (n=30) to Question 1, Part 2, Section B indicated a desire to assume the principalship as it is the highest leadership role in a school building. “I was a Language Arts/Social Studies sixth grade teacher and was asked to be a part of the building leadership team. I love the team and wanted to pursue a Type 75. I became the AP in the same building that I am currently a principal,” shared one respondent. Another response stated, “I’ve always been in leadership roles, even all the way back in grade school. I believe I was born to lead.” Another response that well-represents those individuals who stated their interest in being a leader as the primary reason for pursuing the principalship stated, “I have always felt that I have the capacity to lead people and I am heavily invested in both adult and student learning.”

Several responses (n=12) suggested an interest in furthering the cause of public education as their primary motivations for pursuing the principalship. This can be evidenced by a respondent who stated, “I wanted a greater sense of ownership of all aspects of the school. I was fascinated by the global aspects of education such as how children construct knowledge, differentiation, students with special needs, etc. As I learned more on these topics, I wanted to share that expertise.” In addition, one principal stated, “I pursued the principalship in order to drive larger-scale educational change in hopes of fostering improved student success and better educational quality.”

Although the majority of responses (n=138) indicated positive reasons for pursuing the principalship - having a greater impact on students, encouragement from a former principal, desire to be an instructional leader, and an interest in contributing to the overall cause of public education, other (n=4) responses focused on different motivations for

pursuing the principalship. “I was getting burned out in the classroom and wanted to try something different,” shared one principal. “I wanted to enhance my career and I felt I was capable,” reported another. One principal stated, “I initially got my degree to move up on the salary schedule. When my principal left mid-year and I filled in, I enjoyed it.” Finally, another respondent shared, “I was challenged by having a poor/bad principal and thought I could do better.”

What are the most rewarding aspects of the principalship?

Section 2, Part B, Question 2 asked the principals to state their most rewarding aspects of the principalship. Almost every response fell into one of two categories, being witness to the growth and development of students (n=107), and being witness to the growth and development of adults, including parents, teachers, and community members (n=30). This is best evidenced by one principal who stated, “Working with students and staff member is the most rewarding. This seems very general, but everyone is different, has different needs, and helping both students and staff put their desires, and related to learning, into action is very rewarding. Seeing positive growth in learning, teaming, and how assessment can drive instruction is motivating and helps shift conversations to what can and will be done to help students learn.”

Of the principals who stated that the most rewarding aspects of the principalship were being witness to student growth, these responses can be best represented by the principal who stated, “being in the classroom and a part of ‘ah-ha’ moments”. Similarly, another principal shared, “seeing the progress our students are making through the interventions we have in place.”

Principals whose responses were more adult centered stated that the most rewarding aspects of the principalship were “seeing teachers apply what I have taught to the benefit of a large number of students.” Another principal stated, “being a facilitator of teachers in their discussions regarding how to improve instruction.”

What are the biggest professional challenges as a principal?

Section 2, Part B, Question 3 asked participants to state their biggest professional challenges as a principal. These responses centered around three primary themes:

- Issues surrounding parents (9% of responses, n=13)
 - Of these responses, the principals had a Masters degree (n=7), Specialist degree (n=4), and Doctoral degree (n=2).
 - Additionally, the years of experience that the principal has is represented in these responses as follows: 1 year or less (n=8), 4 years (n=2), 6 years (n=1), over 9 years (n=2).
- Difficulties with teachers (21% of responses, n=30)
 - Of these responses, the principals had a Masters degree (n=16), Specialist degree (n=8), and Doctoral degree (n=6).
 - Additionally, the years of experience that the principal has is represented in these responses as follows: 3 years or less (n=23), 5 years (n=4), and 7 years (n=3).
- The roles and responsibilities of the principalship (64% of responses, n=74)
 - Of these responses, the principals had a Masters degree (n=34), Specialist degree (n=22), and Doctoral degree (n=18).

Nine percent (n=6) of the respondents stated frustrations with parents as being the biggest professional challenges as a principal. As one principal stated, “dealing with parents who think their child is the only one in the school and as such ask for unreasonable accommodations.” Another respondent stated as their biggest professional challenge, “parents who lack appropriate social decorum when presenting a perceived area of need.” One principal stated that working with parents was the biggest professional challenge because, “expectations placed on the school district have become so unrealistic that we cannot possibly keep up.” Another principal, with an implied bit of humor shared, “unreasonable parents present the biggest challenge. Reasonable ones are great!”

Of the principals who stated that parents presented the biggest professional challenge of the principalship, approximately 50% of the respondents were male (n=6) and 50% were female (n=7). Sixty percent of the responses (n=8) were from suburban principals and the remaining responses were from urban principals (n=5). No rural principal stated parents as being their biggest challenge as principal.

Twenty-one percent of principals who responded to the questionnaire stated that teachers presented the biggest challenges of the principalship. One principal stated, “working with teachers that always find something to be upset about. Even though I work hard to create a positive climate, there are always a few that try to find something wrong.” As another principal shared that the biggest challenge is dealing with “poor quality tenured teachers who are protected by the union.” Tenured teachers were also mentioned by other respondents who stated that their biggest challenges were “tenured

teacher who have stopped learning” and “tenured teachers who were not giving their all.” Another principal shared that the biggest professional challenge is “keeping all staff on the same page with the same focus and vision we want to have for the school.”

Two-thirds (n=20) of the respondents who stated that teachers presented the biggest professional challenges were male while one-third (n=10) were female. Every one of these responses came from a principal who works in a school located in a suburban or urban setting (n=20). An almost equal percentage of these responses were principals in elementary schools (K-5, 4-5) (n=7) as middle schools (6-8, 7-8) (n=6).

The vast majority of responses to this question stated that the roles and responsibilities of the principalship presented the biggest professional challenges. The following themes emerged from these responses:

- Lack of time to accomplish multiple tasks not directly related to instructional leadership (n=43)
- Inadequate opportunities for professional development (n=16)
- Meeting State and Federal mandates (n=8)
- Handling the financial crisis facing schools (n=7)

Principals who stated that their biggest professional challenge was finding time to accomplish the multiple tasks required of the principal stated that, “finding time to be an instructional leader by offering up-to-date suggestions to improve class instruction,” and “being a full-time manager you can hardly lead or move your building because you are so busy managing resources, schedules, meetings, and employees,” were the biggest challenges.

In speaking of finding time to accomplish tasks perceived as unrelated to instructional leadership, principals shared, “(it is a challenge to) handle the amount of e-mails received daily in a timely manner and with tact- versus phone or face to face discussions. Balancing paperwork required versus the desire to be in the classrooms and interacting with people,” and “finding the time to be the instructional leader that I should be. There are many things that prohibit me from fulfilling that role”. Another principal shared, “time is a personal and professional challenge. Sometime principals must work in triage mode as opposed to doing things that should be done to benefit all”. Most principals agreed that the biggest professional challenge is “wearing many hats at one time and not being able to get it all done.”

Seventy-seven percent of the responses who stated that the biggest professional challenge with the principalship were with managing the various roles and responsibilities of the principalship were from principals in suburban schools while the remaining responses were from principals who work in rural schools. One hundred percent of the rural principals who responded to this item stated that their biggest professional challenge was with managing the roles and responsibilities of the principalship.

Respondents also indicated a lack of adequate professional development opportunities as the sources of their biggest professional challenges in the principalship. As one principal shared, “it is a challenge to find money to pay for professional development” and “being a full-time manager you can hardly lead or move your building because you are so busy managing resources, schedules, meetings, employees, etc.”

Other principals stated that the limits in time, combined with the lack of ability to implement new information learned from professional development activities is their largest challenge. One principal shared, “tradition and time. Tradition is wonderful, but if it is not flexible and responsive to the needs of the new educational landscape, then it needs to be looked at in parts and as a building block. Time- is there ever enough? Scheduling, instructional time, intervention time, professional learning time, team collaboration time are all necessary to be successful.”

Another theme that is noted in response to the question regarding a principal’s biggest professional challenge was trying to meet State and Federal mandates for student achievement. One principal shared, “maintaining a schedule that is increasingly filled with tasks and requests from the parents, district office, and the State.” Another principal reported, “meeting Federal and State mandates with ever decreasing resources.” Principals also echoed the statement by a principal who shared, “(my biggest professional challenge) is ridiculous AYP/NCLB benchmarks, looking for funding, injustices due to both of these, mandates that don’t promote individual student growth, and the tenure system.”

Finally, a female principal in a suburban school setting, with several years of experience, noted, “The principalship is an intense job. The amount expected of the principal grows more and more each year. Keeping up with the pace is an ongoing challenge.”

What are your biggest personal challenges as principal?

Part 2, Section B, Question 4 asked respondents to consider the areas that presented the biggest personal challenges as principal. The following themes emerged in reviewing responses to this item:

- Balancing work with family (n=68)
- Dealing with work-related stress (n=32)
- Time management (n=42)

Many principals reported a struggle with balancing the time necessary to be a principal and having a family life outside of the principalship. Principals responded with variations of the following statements:

- “Managing the excessive time commitments with my family life/needs.”
- “Continuing to balance my passion for my school with my responsibilities and time needed to be given to my family”
- ”Balancing time with my family- being ‘fully present’ with them, not thinking about school.”
- “Granting myself permission to leave at the end of the day even if tasks on my ‘to-do’ list remain. Using my time most effectively at work so that I can still be home with my family.”
- “Balancing family with work. There are weeks where I could go 48-72 hours without seeing my own children due to late events at school.”
- “Balancing it all- family life, doctoral program, building manager, instructional leader...”

- “Balancing school and family commitments (school usually wins!)”
- “Meeting the needs of my child (4 years old) and school. Lots of evening events (games, concerts, etc.).”
- “Keeping family as my #1 commitment.”
- “Amount of time raising other people’s kids and not mine. Hours and hours spent at games, events, sings, plays, and even overnight trips. I wish we had resources to get help in reducing this workload.

Principals also expressed a challenge when it comes to dealing with work-related stress brought upon by various factors:

- “The toll that the high-level of stress takes on your body.”
- “Taking time to slow down.”
- “Mentally and emotionally leaving school issues at work and not bringing that baggage home.”
- “As a former teacher in the same building, it is a challenge to maintain personal relationships with staff.”
- “Dealing with stress is difficult at times. Time to work out.”
- “My passion and intensity needs to be consistently reflected upon to avoid hopelessness and anger.”
- “Maintaining healthy habits (time to exercise, eating well, etc.)”
- “Anxiety. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle”
- “Managing the emotional aspects of the job.”

- “Maintaining a positive attitude when there is so much negativity, loss of trust, and conflict around here.”
- “Taking care of myself physically and emotionally.”
- “Getting burned out because of demands.”
- “Ethics. There are times when principals are placed in ethical dilemmas that require one to compromise personal ethics in order to follow district directives. Finally, having time to reflect is a challenge. The pace of the day coupled with the revolving door of needs and activities eliminates (virtually) the ability to reflect and collaborate on a meaningful level.

What personal and professional supports do you need in order to retain your professional vitality for the principalship? (*Professional Vitality: The ability to consistently work with passion, vigor, facility, and satisfaction.*)

Part 2, Section B, Question 5 asked participants to state the supports that they believe are necessary in order to retain their passion for the principalship. It is important to note that most responses included a few different statements; most of which can be categorized into the following themes:

- Effective mentoring and support groups (n=38)
- Time away from work (n=54)
- Ability to set one’s own goals and direction (n=43)
- Honest feedback and support from Superintendents and supervisors (n=7)

Responses included:

- “I am not sure. I am pretty upbeat and see hope in all that we do. I like to be challenged- which gives me something new to do.”
- “Exercise-family-and an open and supportive district office.”
- “The need to feel like I make a difference.”
- “Time to read research and investigate what is new and what is coming, connections to research and best practice, a collaboration network to solve problems (not to rehash or vent), critical friends, honest feedback from stakeholders.”
- “Personal - some assistance with attending events. I think principals need to be visible but it is too much.
- “Professional - time to meet with my staff to discuss how to grow - no time to meet as professionals with current schedule.”
- “The freedom to make choices. Work outside the box and the challenge to have our school exceed itself each year.”
- “We do not collaborate enough. Great results; however, they go unnoticed by BOE, media...”
- “Interests outside of education, colleagues to laugh with, cry with, and celebrate with, and a family that understands the nature of the principalship.”
- “Specific processes and expectations that I can manage and schedule. I need more mentoring and honesty from those around and above me.”

- “Time away, not thinking about school issues. Effective support staff and extended learning opportunities.”
- “Establishing and maintaining a clear focus/mission at the district-level. Obtaining the necessary resources (i.e., personnel, time, funding) to ensure success of completing initiatives.
- “More energy! Support from others.”
- “Additional administrative support (Assistant Principal) to field the immediate needs so I can communicate with parents proactively. Time to be the visionary leader and also time to adequately observe instruction and develop teachers to be the best they can be.”
- “Opportunities to dialogue with other principals, to work collaboratively with other principals or administrators to solve problems (big district-wide issues), and chance to stay current on best practices in ed.”
- “Support at home, student growth, teacher growth, personal growth, having a life separate from work.”
- “Positive feedback and public support.”
- “Critical friends, continuing education with colleagues in my situation, authority and support from stakeholders, genuine conversations with staff that promote friendships, keeping school FUN at all costs (have to laugh), and getting back to the kids as often as possible.”
- “Alcohol - just kidding. Humor, family, and a vacation once in a while.”

- “The ability to hire quality people and fire inadequate ones. Teacher tenure needs to disappear. Communication and recognition are keys to high morale. I’m happy if my staff is happy!”
- “Exercise!”
- “Need to know what is expected, what are the priorities, how to handle certain situations, more than 1 year’s worth of mentoring, time with other principals, multi-year contract, clear expectations/supports.”
- “Mentors, supportive Superintendent, true breaks (no Blackberry e-mail)”
- “Acknowledgement of a job well done, an assistance to handle all of the time-consuming, non education related administrivia, support for and appreciation of the need to also be an active member of my family.”
- “Finding ways to distress are crucial. The students keep you passionate about what you do. The parents drain you. So far, the students still win out and I love it 99% of the time.”
- “Professional development opportunities in line with the forward direction the district is looking to make.”
- “I’d love a principal group who is quite supportive and challenging (in a positive way).”
- “A terrific office staff including secretaries and assistant principal.”
- “Supportive feedback from Superintendent- my supervisors. Time to reflect.”
- “Exercise, good leadership from central office, support from family and relationships.”

- “Mentoring from superiors, colleagues in how to handle various situations.
Being surrounded by an administrative team that shares my same core values (sleep and exercise).”
- “Colleagues to talk to.”
- “Set my own goals and be willing to move on when it is time- not being attached.”
- “I don’t have an assistant principal. It’s very difficult to be reflective when you don’t have anyone to process with. It would be helpful to have a regular forum to talk about and brainstorm issues with others in the same situation.”
- “Someone else to dole out and handle discipline- that’s the worst part of my job and most time consuming.”

Summary

Chapter IV is intended to display the data gathered from qualitative analysis of responses to the Generation X Principals Perception Questionnaire Concerning the Roles and Responsibilities of the K-8 Principal that were distributed to 2,453 Illinois K-8 principals.

This chapter presented the data regarding the demographics of the participants within the study (gender, age, educational background, years of principalship experience, and the number of people residing in the household of the principal), the time respondents spend on average each week completing the various tasks required of the principal, and the open-ended responses to the questions presented within the Principals’ Perception Questionnaire.

Chapter V will seek to identify common themes that emerge as a result of this presentation of the study's data.

CHAPTER V

DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine the changing face of the principalship through the perceptions of Illinois public school principals who belong to Generation X. This study also identifies the reasons for which these principals left the classroom for a career in educational leadership. The primary research question is *what are the perceptions of Illinois K-8 principals', who belong to Generation X, regarding the public school principalship?*

Specifically, the fundamental research questions are:

1. Why did the principal decide to pursue a principalship at a relatively young age?
2. What are the most rewarding aspects of the principalship?
3. What challenges does the principal face?
4. What supports are necessary for a new principal to retain his or her professional vitality?

Chapter V is intended to analyze the data gathered from both the quantitative and qualitative analysis of responses to the Generation X Principals Perception Questionnaire Concerning the Roles and Responsibilities of the K-8 Principal that were distributed to 2,453 Illinois K-8 principals.

The researcher sent a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) to the Illinois State Board of Education requesting the ages of every existing K-8 public school principal within the State of Illinois. The State Board of Education was unable to provide the researcher with the requested data regarding the age of current principals; however, was able to provide the school name, address, and grade levels of each K-8 school building in Illinois. Therefore, it was impossible for the researcher to determine which principals were members of Generation X. In order to give each Generation X principal an opportunity to respond to the questionnaire, and to ensure the anonymity of the respondents, the researcher mailed the survey to every principal in Illinois. Two weeks after this survey was mailed to the principals, a reminder post card was sent with a request to complete and return the survey if the principal qualified to participate in this study and if he or she had yet to return the survey to the researcher's PO Box.

At the conclusion of the window of time that the researcher provided for the return of the questionnaires, 142 responses had been completed and returned. Since the researcher was unable to determine the exact number of principals who are members of Generation X, it is impossible to identify the return rate for this study. So, for the purposes this study, the perceptions of 142 responses received will be displayed and analyzed. All percentages displayed come from the total (n=142) respondents except when noted otherwise.

In the synthesis and analysis of the data, the researcher has tried to remain as objective as possible. In an effort to keep his personal bias in check, the researcher has

maintained a journal throughout the course of this project. The journal has been shared with his dissertation director at frequent intervals.

The researcher's findings will be presented in four major categories to address and answer the research questions posed above. Section one will outline why the principals decided to pursue the principalship at a relatively young age. Section two will highlight what the principals stated were the most rewarding aspects of the principalship. Section three will describe the challenges that the principals face. Section four outlines the supports necessary for a new principal to retain his or her professional vitality. Within each of these four sections, the respondents' answers will be triangulated with the literature presented in Chapter II concerning Professional Vitality, the Job Attraction Theory, and the characteristics of Generation X individuals as they approach their work. Finally, the researcher will present the implications suggested by this research study for future principals and implications for Generation X principal aspirants, in particular.

Motivation for Becoming a Principal

The vast majority of principals in this study were positive with statements reflecting a love or passion for working with children as the primary reasons for pursuing the principalship. Participants stated that he or she "loves children" and "I love working with people, working with children, and the opportunity to make a difference."

Additionally, participants stated a desire to have a positive impact on their schools and in the lives of their students. One respondent stated, "As a teacher, (I) got involved in committees. (I) had a desire to make a difference, (and) be a part of solutions. (I)

enjoyed thinking about the school/district as a whole rather than just my classroom.

It was an opportunity to impact more students.”

Similarly, another respondent shared, “I felt I was ready to start using the tools I had accumulated in my toolbox. After holding various leadership positions as a teacher-team leader, mentor, union representative, coach- I realized that I could have an even greater impact on students by working with the adults in their lives (parents, teachers, etc.). Based on my experience in the field and the feedback I received from colleagues, I believed I was ready for the challenge.”

Other principals stated that a previous supervisor and/or mentor provided influence in the principal’s interest in pursuing the principalship. “I was encouraged to (be a principal) by a former principal, took some classes, and again was highly encouraged to continue those studies by a professor/Superintendent. I wanted to impact students, teachers, communities, etc. - more than (being a) teacher might be able to,” reported one participant. “I was encouraged by a previous principal to do so. I had been the AP for eight years. We both felt it would be the natural thing to do,” stated another participant. Similarly, another respondent stated, “A great mentor helped me see my strengths and how they align to move a building in the right direction.”

Principals also indicated a desire to assume the principalship as it is the highest leadership role in a school building. “I was a Language Arts/Social Studies sixth grade teacher and was asked to be a part of the building leadership team. I love the team and wanted to pursue a Type 75. I became the AP in the same building that I am currently a principal,” shared one respondent. Another response stated, “I’ve always been in

leadership roles, even all the way back in grade school. I believe I was born to leave.” Another principal stated that their personal interest in being a leader was the primary reason for pursuing the principalship; “I have always felt that I have the capacity to lead people and I am heavily invested in both adult and student learning.”

Other principals suggested an interest in furthering the cause of public education as their primary motivations for pursuing the principalship. This can be evidenced by a respondent who stated, “I wanted a greater sense of ownership of all aspects of the school. I was fascinated by the global aspects of education such as how children construct knowledge, differentiation, students with special needs, etc. As I learned more on these topics, I wanted to share that expertise.” In addition, one principal stated, “I pursued the principalship in order to drive larger-scale educational change in hopes of fostering improved student success and better educational quality.”

Although the majority of responses indicated positive reasons for pursuing the principalship- having a greater impact on students, encouragement from a former principal, desire to be an instructional leader, and an interest in contributing to the overall cause of public education, other responses focused on different motivations for pursuing the principalship. “I was getting burned out in the classroom and wanted to try something different,” shared one principal. “I wanted to enhance my career and I felt I was capable,” reported another. One principal stated, “I initially got my degree to move up on the salary schedule. When my principal left mid-year and I filled in, I enjoyed it.” Finally, another respondent shared, “I was challenged by having a poor/bad principal and thought I could do better.”

Recent research on Generation X in the workplace suggests that Xers are motivated by change (Tulgan, 2000). The participants in this study, regardless of their personal motivations for pursuing the principalship, were behaving within the context of what the research says about Generation X. The only constant in their lives...is change. For members of Generation X, changing one's job from teacher to principal is to be expected. Furthermore, Generation X values individual and nurturing relationships (Tulgan, 2000). For a Superintendent to identify a member of Generation X and encourage him or her to pursue a position of leadership supports what has been identified as a motivating characteristic of members of Generation X.

According to Harvey and Donaldson (2003), Professional Vitality is the ability to consistently work with:

- Passion - a strong sense of inner purpose,
- Vigor - mental, physical, and emotional energy,
- Facility - "savvy" and ability to do the job, and
- Satisfaction - a sense of pleasure, accomplishment, and fulfillment.

Within the framework of Professional Vitality, principals who participated in this study and stated that their primary motivations for pursuing the principalship were to "have a greater sense of ownership in the school" or because they "was capable of doing a good job" shared views consistent with those individuals who possess Professional Vitality. These principals pursued the principalship to become more satisfied in their professional lives and because they felt they had the passion and vigor required to be a principal.

Rewarding Aspects of the Principalship

In this study, almost every principal who participated had a response regarding the most rewarding aspects of the principalship that fell into one of two categories, being witness to the growth and development of students and being witness to the growth and development of adults, including parents, teachers, and community members. This is best evidenced by one principal who stated, “Working with students and staff member is the most rewarding. This seems very general, but everyone is different, has different needs, and helping both students and staff put their desires, related to learning, into action is very rewarding. Seeing positive growth in learning, teaming, and how assessment can drive instruction is motivating and helps shift conversations to what can and will be done to help students learn.”

Of the principals who stated that the most rewarding aspects of the principalship were being witness to student growth, these responses can be best represented by the principal who stated, “being in the classroom and a part of ‘ah-ha’ moments.” Similarly, another principal shared, “seeing the progress our students are making through the interventions we have in place.”

Principals whose responses were more adult centered stated that the most rewarding aspects of the principalship were “seeing teachers apply what I have taught to the benefit of a large number of students.” Another principal stated, “being a facilitator of teachers in their discussions regarding how to improve instruction.”

The Job Attraction Theory, formulated by Rynes and Barber (1998) identified three primary reasons that one may be attracted to a position:

1. Individual characteristics of the job seeker
2. Attributes of the job
3. Organizational characteristics (conditions of the workplace). (p. 286)

As was shared by principals who participated in this study, the most rewarding aspects of the principalship can be categorized within one of the three primary reasons presented in the Job Attraction Theory; a principals desire to make a larger contribution to a school community (Job Attraction Theory Reason 1), the ability to have a “say” in the decisions that are made in all aspects of the school (Job Attraction Theory Reason 2), and the ability to motivate and support all stakeholders within the school community (Job Attraction Theory Reason 3).

The Challenges of the Principalship

The Generation X principals in this study we asked to state their biggest professional challenges as a principal. These responses centered around three primary themes:

- Issues surrounding parents
- Difficulties with teachers
- The significant roles and responsibilities of the principalship

Parents

To consider responses from principals who indicated that the biggest challenges facing them as principals were the parents of their students, it is important to analyze what the research says about the parenting styles that were prevalent when the members of Generation X were growing up.

The 51 million members of Generation X, born between 1965 and 1976, grew up in a very different world than previous generations. Divorce and working moms created "latchkey" kids out of many in this generation. This led to traits of independence, resilience and adaptability. Generation X feels strongly that "I don't need someone looking over my shoulder."

Generation X saw their parents get laid off or face job insecurity. Many of them also entered the workplace in the early '80s, when the economy was in a downturn. Because of these factors, they've redefined loyalty. Instead of remaining loyal to their company, they have a commitment to their work, to the team they work with, and the boss they work for. For example, a Baby Boomer complains about his dissatisfaction with management, but figures it's part of the job. A Gen Xer doesn't waste time complaining - she sends her resume out and accepts the best offer she can find at another organization (Thielfoldt & Scheef, 2004).

With this in mind, it is also important to consider the parenting styles that are prevalent in 2010 and are being used to parent the students who are in this study's participants schools today. Helicopter parent is a colloquial, early 21st-century term for a parent who pays extremely close attention to his or her child's or children's experiences and problems, particularly at educational institutions (Cline & Fay, 1990). Whereas Generation X principals had been "latchkey" kids and, as a result, become independent, resilient, and adaptable, their students have parents who pay extremely close attention to their experiences and problems, particularly at educational institutions.

As one principal stated, “dealing with parents who think their child is the only one in the school and as such ask for unreasonable accommodations.” Another respondent stated as their biggest professional challenge, “parents who lack appropriate social decorum when presenting a perceived area of need.” Another principal, with an implied bit of humor shared, “unreasonable parents present the biggest challenge. Reasonable ones are great!” Of the principals who stated that parents presented the biggest professional challenge of the principalship, approximately 50% of the respondents were male and 50% were female. Sixty percent of the responses were from suburban principals and the remaining responses were from urban principals. No rural principal stated parents as being their biggest challenge as principal.

According to Harvey and Donaldson (2003), Professional Vitality is the ability to consistently work with:

- Passion - a strong sense of inner purpose,
- Vigor - mental, physical, and emotional energy,
- Facility - “savvy” and ability to do the job, and
- Satisfaction - a sense of pleasure, accomplishment, and fulfillment.

Within the context of professional vitality, it is important to consider one principal who stated that working with parents was the biggest professional challenge because, “expectations placed on the school district have become so unrealistic that we cannot possibly keep up.” With a principal’s perception that he or she is not able to “possibly keep up,” the principal may be more at risk of losing his or her vigor

(emotional energy) and passion (strong sense of purpose) for the position and therefore may explain why parents present a challenge to principals who belong to Generation X.

Teachers

Twenty-one percent of principals who responded to the questionnaire stated that teachers presented the biggest challenges of the principalship. One principal stated, “working with teachers that always find something to be upset about. Even though I work hard to create a positive climate, there are always a few that try to find something wrong.” As another principal shared that the biggest challenge is dealing with “poor quality tenured teachers who are protected by the union.” Tenured teachers were also mentioned by other respondents who stated that their biggest challenges were “tenured teacher who have stopped learning” and “tenured teachers who were not giving their all.” Another principal shared that the biggest professional challenge is “keeping all staff on the same page with the same focus and vision we want to have for the school.”

The existing research on Generation X indicates that members of this generation are resilient, independent, creative, and possess the ability to problem solver (Thielfoldt & Scheef, 2004). The principals in this study, as evidenced by their responses, are able to problem solve and be creative in their interactions with teachers. Based on the Generation X research, it would be expected that dealing with teachers would then not be a challenge. However, the principals in this study stated that teachers presented them with the biggest challenges when fulfilling the roles and responsibilities of the principalship.

The Roles and Responsibilities of the Principalship

The vast majority of responses to this question stated that the roles and responsibilities of the principalship presented the biggest professional challenges. The following themes emerged from these responses:

- Lack of time to accomplish multiple tasks not directly related to instructional leadership
- Inadequate opportunities for professional development
- Meeting State and Federal mandates
- Handling the financial crisis facing schools

One of the most significant themes that emerged from the principals' responses to the question regarding the biggest challenges of the principalship was the issue of time; specifically, the lack of enough time to fulfill all of the roles and responsibilities required of a principal.

Principals who stated that their biggest professional challenge was finding time to accomplish the multiple tasks required of the principal stated that, "finding time to be an instructional leader by offering up-to-date suggestions to improve class instruction," and "being a full-time manager you can hardly lead or move your building because you are so busy managing resources, schedules, meetings, and employees," were the biggest challenges.

In speaking of finding time to accomplish tasks perceived as unrelated to instructional leadership, principals shared, "(it is a challenge to) handle the amount of e-mails received daily in a timely manner and with tact - versus phone or face to face

discussions. Balancing paperwork required versus the desire to be in the classrooms and interacting with people,” and “finding the time to be the instructional leader that I should be. There are many things that prohibit me from fulfilling that role.” Another principal shared, “time is a personal and professional challenge. Sometime principals must work in triage mode as opposed to doing things that should be done to benefit all.” Most principals agreed that the biggest professional challenge is “wearing many hats at one time and not being able to get it all done.”

Respondents also indicated a lack of adequate professional development opportunities as the sources of their biggest professional challenges in the principalship. As one principal shared, “it is a challenge to find money to pay for professional development” and “being a full-time manager you can hardly lead or move your building because you are so busy managing resources, schedules, meetings, employees, etc.”

Other principals stated that the limits in time, combined with the lack of ability to implement new information learned from professional development activities is their largest challenge. One principal shared, “tradition and time. Tradition is wonderful, but if it is not flexible and responsive to the needs of the new educational landscape, then it needs to be looked at in parts and as a building block. Time - is there ever enough? Scheduling, instructional time, intervention time, professional learning time, team collaboration time are all necessary to be successful.”

Table 1 in Chapter IV presents the data that corresponds to the information collected by the Generation X principals in this study as they responded to the average number of minutes each week that he or she spends on the various roles and

responsibilities associated with the principalship. Interestingly, the total average number of minutes spent on these tasks- classroom observations, handling student discipline, dealing with buildings/grounds issues, maintaining contact with parents, holding teacher meetings, participating in student meetings, attending administrative meetings, completing paperwork, attending public events, facilitating curriculum development projects, participating in personal professional development activities, and performing other work-related tasks - was 1,903. This equates to 31.7 hours each week, on average, that principals in this study are spending fulfilling their roles as Illinois K-8 principals.

According to the United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (UBLS, 2010), in June 2010, the average workweek for all employees decreased by 0.1 hour to 34.1 hours. Therefore, the data shows that the average number of minutes, each week, spent by principals on the roles and responsibilities of the principalship is actually 2.4 hours less than the current national average work week.

Although the data collected in this study suggests that the participants, on average, spend 2.4 hours less fulfilling the roles and responsibilities of the principalship as compared to the average work week of other jobs, the perception by the participants is that there is not enough time in a given week to complete all of the tasks and responsibilities required of the principal. When analyzing the data from subgroups of the participants in the study, specific mention should be made to how the different subgroups use their time each week to fulfill the roles and responsibilities of the principalship.

Considering male Generation X principals and female Generation X

principals who participated in this study, males, on average, spent 152 minutes more each week than female principals. However, within each specific task, it is important to note that as shown in the Tables presented in Chapter IV of this study, female principals spent more time in the three areas that are specific to the roles of the principal that have the biggest impact on creating an effective learning community; classroom observation, curriculum development, and personal professional development. School leadership in a professional learning community is socially constructed and culturally sensitive (Foster & St. Hilaire, 2003; Harris, 2003; Williams, 2006). Leadership evolves as administrators and teachers collaborate, support each other's growth, and redefine their systemic roles as professionals (Hoerr, 1996). As leadership shifts from an individual to an organizational capacity, the focus of structures and policies shifts from prescribing roles and well-defined role relationships to maintaining social legitimacy and acquiring the resources necessary to provide quality learning opportunities, not only for students but for teachers and administrators as well (Ogawa & Bossert, 2000; Williams, 2006). Male principals, in this study, reported that most of their weekly time was spent doing clerical/paperwork, attending administrative meetings, and facilitating teacher meetings. It should be noted that both male and female principals both indicated that the task that required the most amount of time was completing clerical/paperwork that was the responsibility of the principal.

With regards to the principal's level of education, as one may expect, principals who had earned a doctoral degree tended to spend less minutes each week on various

tasks than their counterparts who had Specialist and Masters' degrees. The most glaring difference, when analyzing the ways in which these three groups of principals reported spending their time can be found when looking at the average number of minutes spent on clerical/paperwork. While principals with a Master's degree (a minimum requirement for an Illinois principalship) and those with a Specialist degree, they spend almost three times the number of minutes each week completing paperwork when compared to principals with a Doctoral degree.

While many of the Generation X principals in the study stated that the lack of time was a contributing factor to challenging them as principals, the quantitative data collected suggests that the lack of time may be a *perceived* lack of time as opposed to an actual lack of time. Given a standard workweek of 40 hours, the data suggests that the work of a principal can be completed within the amount of time estimated by the principals in this study. However, it is important to look closer at the perception that there is not enough time to fulfill the roles and responsibilities because a perceived lack of time may play a role in a principal's ability to get the job done. Research shows that Generation Xers have been raised in a culture of immediacy and expect the world to respond quickly to their input. They want results so aggressively because they want feedback, which helps them measure their success and adjust their approach accordingly (Tulgan, 2000). Therefore, the data of this study, when viewed within the framework of the research that has been done on Generation X, presents itself as a reflection of what is known about Generation X, that their understanding of how their time is used may be based more upon a desire to have an immediate result than it is based upon reality.

Aside from the principals in this study stating that the lack of time was a significant challenge of the principalship, it was also stated that the inability to spend time away from work was also a challenge. According to a recent study (Lawsson, 2009), Generation X is described as, “small, highly educated, widely diverse group of individuals, who as teenagers were labeled “slackers,” are taking up space in the labor force. For the group of individuals 30 to 39 years of age, 56% are married couple households; this number is down 4% from a decade ago. Of these households, 80% have children and both parents work, most of which work full-time.”

In this study, principals who indicated that they lived with one or more people tended to spend less time at work. In general, principals spend more amounts of time on specific work tasks if they are single, or live with only one other person than principal's who live with two or more people. Principals who are single, or who live alone, spend approximately 2,035 minutes on the tasks surveyed in this questionnaire compared with principals who have six people residing in their household who spend approximately 1,617 minutes each week on the same tasks. Principals who have four and six people, including themselves, living in their household each spend approximately the same amount of time on work tasks each week, 1,616 and 1,617 minutes each respectively. Principals who have two, three, or five people residing within their households spend roughly the same amount of time on principal tasks; 1,815, 1,853, and 1,961 minutes respectively.

When considering the three frameworks in which this study explores- Generation X, The Job Attraction Theory, and Professional Vitality - it is important to consider the

value that these principals, members of Generation X, have on personal time.

According to a 2001 study (Catalyst, 2001) of 4,500 Generation X employees at 10 organizations, members of Generation X appear to place a much higher priority on personal and family-related goals than on their career-related goals: 84% of the respondents stated that it was extremely important to them to have a loving family, 72% indicated that it was extremely important to have a relationship with a significant other, while 79% responded that it was extremely important to enjoy life.

The responses stated by principals who participated in this study supports the Generation X literature. Many principals reported a struggle with balancing the time necessary to be a principal and having a family life outside of the principalship.

Principals responded with variations of the following statements:

- “Managing the excessive time commitments with my family life/needs.”
- “Continuing to balance my passion for my school with my responsibilities and time needed to be given to my family.”
- “Balancing time with my family- being ‘fully present’ with them, not thinking about school.”
- “Granting myself permission to leave at the end of the day even if tasks on my ‘to-do’ list remain. Using my time most effectively at work so that I can still be home with my family.”
- “Balancing family with work. There are weeks where I could go 48-72 hours without seeing my own children due to late events at school.”

- “Balancing it all- family life, doctoral program, building manager, instructional leader...”
- “Balancing school and family commitments (school usually wins!).”
- “Meeting the needs of my child (4 years old) and school. Lots of evening events (games, concerts, etc.).”
- “Keeping family as my #1 commitment.”
- “Amount of time raising other people’s kids and not mine. Hours and hours spent at games, events, sings, plays, and even overnight trips. I wish we had resources to get help in reducing this workload.”

Gen X individuals are not slackers; they just have different values, like putting their family first. While their parents (Baby Boomers) put their jobs before their families, Gen X is determined to put their families before their jobs. This small generation has the task of taking care of two generations that together are 40% larger than they are: their parents and their children. Gen X believes they should be able to enjoy their jobs and also have time for their families. They insist you do not have to give up one to have the other. Gen X women are testing and defeating the “mommy track” stigma; defined as a career path that allows a mother flexible or reduced work hours but tends to slow or block advancement (Lawsson, 2009). They are taking time to have their children, and then go back to work with demands for flexible scheduling and work from home options. The principals in this study exhibited a conflict between the expectations that exist for the school principal and their own beliefs and understandings as a member of Generation X. Generation X principals need to spend time fulfilling the aspects of their work that offer

the most personal fulfillment. The principals in this study stated that they were motivated by seeing people grow and change in a positive manner throughout the course of a school year. They are not going to be personally fulfilled unless they are given many opportunities to experience and witness these changes. Spending time in meetings or completing paperwork will not retain the Professional Vitality of Generation X principals as it is not something in which they value. When Generation X is not personally gratified with their work, they will leave and find another position that promises to offer this gratification.

Support Systems Needed to Have Professional Vitality

When considering the support systems that are required to retain one's professional vitality, principals who participated in this study gave a variety of responses for what they needed to retain their professional vitality; most of which can be categorized into the following themes:

- Effective mentoring and support groups
- Time away from work
- Ability to set one's own goals and direction
- Honest feedback and support from Superintendents and supervisors

Effective Mentoring and Support Groups

The literature about Generation X suggests that members of this generation are attracted to jobs that provide the following (Erickson, 2009; Strauss & Howe, 1997):

- Constant feedback
- Open and honest communication between all levels of the organization
- Sense of purpose

The Illinois New Principal Mentoring Program (INPM) provides new principals an opportunity to have a support system so that the principal can retain their professional vitality. Specifically, the INPM has three goals, all of which support what Generation X literature says is important to members of Generation X in the workplace:

1. The leadership mentor will provide direct mentoring support to new principals by encouraging and advocating a high level of performance to achieve targeted and observable progress toward becoming an effective instructional leader.
2. The mentor new principal will connect leadership development efforts to the improvement needs of the school, resulting in a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning.
3. The relationship between the mentor and new principal will be an integral component for assessing the complex professional learning needs of the new principal. The mentor will use multiple mentoring strategies to provide targeted, appropriate, and timely learning and development opportunities to new principals.

The desires of principals in this study regarding the mentoring and supports needed to retain their professional vitality are aligned with the goals of INPM and are consistent with the Generation X literature:

- “We do not collaborate enough. Great results; however, they go unnoticed by BOE, media...”
- “Specific processes and expectations that I can manage and schedule. I need more mentoring and honesty from those around and above me.”
- “More energy! Support from others.”
- “Opportunities to dialogue with other principals, to work collaboratively with other principals or administrators to solve problems (big district-wide issues), and chance to stay current on best practices in ed.”
- “Critical friends, continuing education with colleagues in my situation, authority and support from stakeholders, genuine conversations with staff that promote friendships, keeping school FUN at all costs (have to laugh), and getting back to the kids as often as possible.”
- “Need to know what is expected, what are the priorities, how to handle certain situations, more than 1 year’s worth of mentoring, time with other principals, multi-year contract, clear expectations/supports.”
- “Mentors, supportive Superintendent, true breaks (no Blackberry e-mail).”
- “I’d love a principal group who is quite supportive and challenging (in a positive way).”
- “Mentoring from superiors, colleagues in how to handle various situations.”

- “Colleagues to talk to.”
- “It’s very difficult to be reflective when you don’t have anyone to process with. It would be helpful to have a regular forum to talk about and brainstorm issues with others in the same situation.”

The responses shared by the participants in this study underscore the importance and demand for formal mentoring programs and support networks.

Ability to Set Own Goals

The most important factors for success for employees who are in Generation X to be given total responsibility for a specific project along with the tools, information, support, and freedom they need to focus on accomplishing it (Tulgan, 1996).

The research is supported by principals who participated in this study:

- “Set my own goals and be willing to move on when it is time- not being attached.”
- “The ability to hire quality people and fire inadequate ones. Teacher tenure needs to disappear. Communication and recognition are keys to high morale. I’m happy if my staff is happy!”
- “Establishing and maintaining a clear focus/mission at the district-level. Obtaining the necessary resources (i.e., personnel, time, funding) to ensure success of completing initiatives.
- “Specific processes and expectations that I can manage and schedule.”
- “The freedom to make choices. Work outside the box and the challenge to have our school exceed itself each year.”

All organizations, including school districts, must consider these statistics when designing positions that may attract candidate from this particular generation. In combining the traits of Generation X into one profile, members of this generation are independent, adaptable, and willing to pursue new opportunities. Members of Generation X work best when they're given the desired outcome and then turned loose to figure out how to achieve it. This means a mentor should guide them with feedback and suggestions, not step-by-step instructions (Thielfoldt & Scheef, 2004).

Time Away from Work

Principals in this study shared one concept that is not prevalent in the literature on Generation X or within the literature surrounding Professional Vitality or The Job Attraction Theory. The principals in this study stated a need to have time away from work. Specifically, principals stated a desire to be disconnected (physically and mentally) from the school cell phone or Blackberry and able to focus on their own physical and mental well-being as evidence by the following comments:

- “Exercise-family-and an open and supportive district office.”
- “Interests outside of education, colleagues to laugh with, cry with, and celebrate with, and a family that understands the nature of the principalship.”
- “Time away, not thinking about school issues.”
- “Humor, family, and a vacation once in a while.”
- “Exercise!”
- “Exercise, good leadership from central office, support from family and relationships.”

Limitations of the Study

As a result of this study, the researcher intended to identify the changing face of the principalship through the perspectives of K-8 principals who belong to Generation X. Furthermore, the researcher intended to identify the reasons why an individual may pursue the principalship at a relatively young age, the unique challenges that young principals face, the most rewarding aspects of the principalship, and the factors that contribute to their overall professional vitality toward the principalship.

A possible limitation to this study was that the principals surveyed will not have had a minimum tenure in the principalship. So, it was possible that a responder was a first year principal who is planning on leaving the position after the end of the school year due to dissatisfaction with the position, or, conversely, a second year principal who may choose to pursue another position in education in the central office. This may be a limitation as these types of individuals may have planned on leaving the principalship early as part of their professional plan to work in the central office, not due to dissatisfaction with the principalship. Or, a first year principal may not have the experience necessary to see the principalship from the perspective of a person who has done it for more than one year. After all, all new jobs present new challenges. For this study, though, the mere fact that someone has entered the principalship, suggests an initial willingness to face the challenges that are very much a part of the position. Therefore, this input does make a positive contribution to this study.

Another possible limitation to this study is the researcher's biases toward the subject. The researcher was a middle school principal at the age of 30. After three years

in the principalship, the researcher left to take a position in the private sector. The researcher's personal feelings toward the roles and responsibilities of the principalship are tainted, in both a positive and negative way, based on his experience in the position. To mitigate the impact that the researcher's own biases may have on this study, the researcher kept a journal of the researcher's thoughts, feelings, and reactions while pursuing this study. It was important, that through this entire research process, the researcher had the opportunity to process his feelings in a journal in order to ensure that any biases that emerge are written in the journal and not written in this study.

Finally, this data is limited to the State of Illinois and should not be generalized to other states. Illinois is unique in that there is a wide variety of school systems present within the state. In the Chicagoland area, it is not uncommon to have four or more school districts serving one specific suburb or for one school district to serve grades K-8 while a neighboring school district is PreK-12. Additionally, school districts that are located outside of the Chicagoland area tend to be more rural in structure and in the demographics of the population in which they serve. These factors unique to Illinois may present a limitation in this study.

Implications for Leadership Preparation

The literature on the roles and responsibilities of the principalship and Generation X and the data obtained from this qualitative research study suggest that school districts should analyze and possibly reconsider how young principals are supported and mentored in their role of principal and implement policies and procedures that ensure that contracted vacation time and professional development time is used. Additionally, the literature and data presented in this study suggest that principal preparation programs should provide coursework that focuses on the aspect of the principalship that appears to be the biggest source of frustration for principals who are members of Generation X, time management. To keep schools on the cutting edge, diligence in cultivating, training, and inspiring a new generation of school leaders- especially for the principalship, must be exercised (Lovely, 2004).

The principals in this study desire a support network comprised of critical peers and mentors. While organizations and associations such as the National Associate of Elementary School Principals, the Illinois New Principal Mentoring Program, and the Illinois Principals Association strive to provide principals with a support network, the responses from the principals in this study suggest that either these associations are not meeting the needs of Generation X principals, or these principals are not taking advantage of the support systems that these agencies' offer.

School districts should also consider the ways in which young principals are mentored. Even more so than Baby Boomers, members of Generation X dislike authority and rigid work requirements. Providing feedback on their performance should play a big

part, as should encouraging their creativity and initiative to find new ways to get tasks done (Thielfoldt & Scheef, 2004). As more Generation X members assume principalships, school districts need to provide a mentor who understands that his or her roles is to provide regular and frequent, honest, feedback and encourage the principal to fulfill the roles and responsibilities of the principalship in a manner that allows the new principal to use his or her creativity to develop new and innovate ways to run the school building.

According to a 2001 study (Catalyst, 2001) of 4,500 Generation X employees at 10 organizations, members of Generation X appear to place a much higher priority on personal and family-related goals than on their career-related goals. Therefore, school districts need to encourage, or possibly mandate, that their school administrators utilize the time off that has been agreed to in their professional contract so that the principals can have time away from the principalship. The introduction of the Blackberry in recent years may have had a negative impact on a principal's ability to truly "disconnect" from their work. After all, when the Blackberry buzzes on a Sunday night, the research about Generation X tells us that we can expect members of this generation to react to the situation immediately and address the issue presented by the Blackberry. Generation X principals need time away from work, physically and electronically.

The principals in this study highlighted what is stated in the literature on Generation X - their desire to have a healthy life outside of school often conflicts with their desire to be a successful principal. Generation X principals in this study, whether expressing a desire for "true" vacation, time to exercise, or the ability to leave work to be

an active member of their family, overwhelmingly suggested that their biggest challenges for retaining their professional vitality towards the principalship all revolved around the issue of having a life outside of school. As more and more members of Generation X assume the principalship, school districts will need to understand that this generation weighs personal satisfaction more than financial stability when it comes to job satisfaction. As an added incentive, school districts may want to consider including a gym membership or other programs that will allow the principal to lead a life of emotional and physical wellness.

Wanted: A miracle worker who can do more with less, pacify rival groups, endure chronic second guessing, tolerate low levels of support, process large volumes of paper and work double shifts (75 nights a year out). He or she will have carte blanche to innovate, but cannot spend much money, replace any personnel, or upset any constituency (Evans, 1995). As Evans suggests, the principals in this study are most challenged by managing all of the roles and responsibilities of the principalship. Of course, school districts should consider redefining their own principal job descriptions; however, it may be more appropriate for principal preparations programs to consider adding coursework that provides future principals with the skills necessary to deal with the stressful lifestyle of the elementary or middle school principal. As was stated by many of the principals who responded to this research study, the ability to fit all of the tasks expected of the principal was the biggest challenge of the principalship. However, this study also showed that the average time estimated by the principals in this study to complete the tasks of the principalship was less than the national average work week. Of

course, the roles and responsibilities of the principal include many intangible “tasks” (assisting with a stuck locker, helping a teacher clean up a messy hallway, or “being there” to listen to an upset staff member). This researcher is certainly not suggesting that a school principal has less work to do than the average United States worker. This researcher is suggesting that new principals be adequately prepared to manage their time appropriately so that the most important duties of the principalship are given the amount of time that is needed. Furthermore, school districts need to provide building level support so that principals, as the instructional leaders of the school, are able to rest easy knowing that the building will run smoothly while the principal is tending to duties such as classroom observation, curriculum development, and personal professional development.

Further Research

The results presented in this study offer opportunities for further research. An audit of current Illinois principal preparation programs within the context of the manners in which principals in this study use their time at work may uncover some opportunities to provide additional preparation in the areas that principals in this study identified as areas that are most time consuming. Additionally, the results of this study may present an opportunity to research the types of activities that are done within each studied task (curriculum development, teacher meetings, etc.) so that a better understanding of the specific activities that present the most, or least, challenges to Generation X principals, may be identified. Another topic worthy of further research is the impact that new technologies, specifically, Blackberrys, have on principal’s perceptions of the

principalship and on their ability to retain their professional vitality towards the principalship. Finally, research regarding the effect of the recent statewide budget cuts and legislation has on the mentoring and support opportunities to Illinois principals may provide useful insight when understanding the perceptions presented by principals in this study.

Conclusion

The principals in this study decided to pursue the principalship for a variety of reasons; however, most of the principals in this study chose to pursue the principalship so that he or she could have a greater, more significant impact, on a school community. Other principals decided to pursue the principalship because a mentor or supervisor noticed something about the principal that led them to encourage the principal to assume the principalship. For a small portion of this principals; however, their pursuit of the principalship was less planned and more a matter of circumstance, the principal of their building left unexpectedly and they had the credentials to assume the principalship.

In this study, the principals reported that the most rewarding aspects of the principalship were seeing the people with whom they work grow and change over the course of the school year. Whether it was seeing a teacher, or a team of teachers, develop a unit of study that was successful, or being witness to students and their “a-ha” moments, these principals received the most amount of personal gratification from seeing the positive growth of the people in their building.

The biggest challenge of the principalship, as presented in this study, is the principal’s struggle to manage and fulfill all of the expectations and duties that are the

responsibility of the principal in a manner that is timely and effective. The principals in this study displayed a need to have a strong support network comprised of family, professional peers, critical friends, and superiors in order to meet these challenges.

The principals in this study stated that the biggest supports that were necessary for them to retain their professional vitality were being able to live a personally gratifying life that allowed them to be successful in the principalship while maintaining healthy lifestyle and spending quality time away from work.

As we look at redefining principal preparation experiences, these voices need to be heeded to help ensure that Generation Xers who serve as educational leaders in our schools will do so with a sense of passion, vigor, and commitment to their school organizations.

APPENDIX A

PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTION QUESTIONNAIRE

**GENERATION X PRINCIPALS PERCEPTION QUESTIONNAIRE CONCERNING
THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE K-8 PRINCIPAL**

PART 1, Section A (Circle your responses)

1. What is your gender?

M F

2. What is your age?

<27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35

3. What is your highest level of education?

Bachelor's Master's Specialist Doctorate Post-Doctorate

4. How many people reside in your household?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7+

Part 1, Section B

1. How many years have you served in the principalship?

Less than 1 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9+

2. How many years have you served in your current position?

Less than 1 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9+

3. Which word best describes the location of your school building?

Rural Urban Suburban

4. Grade levels of building: _____(i.e., K-8, K-2, 3-5, 6-8)

5. Total Student Enrollment (number): _____

APPENDIX B
COVER LETTER

Dear Principal,

As a doctoral candidate at Loyola University Chicago, I am conducting research for my dissertation entitled, *Perceptions of the Principalship by K-8 Principals in Illinois Who Belong to Generation X*. The purpose of my study is to identify the roles and responsibilities of the Illinois public school principal as perceived by principals who are members of Generation X. **If you do not belong to Generation X (born between 1965 and 1979), you may discard this letter and the contents of this envelope.**

Your participation will provide an opportunity for your voice to be heard by sharing your perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of the principalship.

The enclosed Principals' Perception Questionnaire is intended to provide data that will help me better understand the roles and responsibilities of the principal, the professional challenges and rewards of the principalship, and the personal challenges and rewards of the principalship.

When completing the questionnaire, I will be asking you to consider the factors that contribute to your professional vitality, a term that is used to define an individual's ability to perform his or her job with passion, vigor, facility, and satisfaction.

To participate in this study, please complete the enclosed Principals' Perceptions Questionnaire (*this should take approximately 10-15 minutes*), place the completed questionnaire in the self-addressed stamped envelope provided, and mail it back to me by _____. If you do not wish to participate please return the unanswered form in the return envelope.

If you have questions about the study, please feel free to contact me at 773-459-5037. You may also contact Dr. Marla Israel, my dissertation director at Loyola University at 312-915-6336 if you have questions or concerns regarding the validity of this study. If you should have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Loyola Compliance Manager at 773-508-2629.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Sincerely,

Keith Westman
Doctoral Candidate, Loyola University Chicago

APPENDIX C
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT REQUEST

Freedom of Information Office

Illinois State Board of Education
100 North First Street
Springfield, Illinois 62777-0001
ATTN: FOIA Request

September 17, 2009

Dear Sir or Madam:

I, Keith Westman, hereby request that the Illinois State Board of Education produce the following public records pursuant to the provisions of the Illinois Freedom of Information Act, 5 Ill. Comp. Stat. Ann. 140/1 *et seq.* for the purposes of Doctoral research at Loyola University Chicago which is being supervised by Dr. Marla Israel, Associate Professor in the School of Education:

- 1. The name, age, school mailing address, and all other demographic data available for Illinois public school elementary principals who are age 35 or younger.**

Please produce the requested record(s) to **Keith Westman, 755 Ridge Road, Highland Park, Illinois, 60035** or (if provided electronically) **keithwestman@gmail.com**, within seven (7) working days of your receipt of this request (Ill. Comp Stat. Ann. 140/3(c)). If the requested record(s) cannot be produced within seven (7) working days, please notify me in writing of the reason(s) for the delay and the date by which the requested record(s) will be available.

If you do not understand this request, or any portion thereof, or if you feel you require clarification of this request, or any portion thereof, please contact me at 847-770-3551.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Keith Westman
Sent via Fax to 217-524-8585

APPENDIX D

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT REQUEST RESPONSE

From: "WANCKET MARK A" MWANCKET@isbe.net
Date: September 25, 2009 5:48:55 PM EDT
To: "Keith Westman" keithwestman@gmail.com
Subject: your FOIA request

September 25, 2009

[e-mailed to keithwestman@gmail.com]

Keith Westman
755 Ridge Road
Highland Park, Illinois 60035

Dear Mr. Westman:

This letter is in response to your request for information, which is being processed under the Illinois Freedom of Information Act. Your request was received on 9/17/09.

You have requested "the name, age, school mailing address, and all other demographic data available for Illinois public school elementary principals who are age 35 or younger."

Most of the information you seek can be found at the following location on the ISBE website: http://www.isbe.net/research/xls/dir_ed_entities.xls

Sort Column B to separate district offices from school buildings.

Then sort Column E to identify elementary schools. The four-digit codes for elementary schools begin with "2."

You can also sort Column M for grades served.

Pursuant to 5 ILCS 140/7 (1) (b), an individual's age, gender and ethnicity are not disclosed as it would constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy.

If you have questions, contact Mark Wancket at 217-782-4648.

Sincerely,

Matt Vanover
Director of Public Information

APPENDIX E
REMINDER POST CARD

As a doctoral candidate at **Loyola University Chicago**, I am conducting research for my dissertation entitled, *The Changing Face of the Principalship: Perceptions of the Principalship by K-8 Principals in Illinois Who Are Under the Age of Thirty Five*. The purpose of my study is to identify the roles and responsibilities of the Illinois public school principal as perceived by principals who are under the age of thirty-five.

If you have already completed and returned the Principals' Perception Questionnaire that was mailed to you three weeks ago, thank you. **If not, please complete the Questionnaire and return in the stamped envelope that was provided.**

Sincerely,

Keith Westman

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VITA

Keith Westman is the son of Barbara “Debbie” Westman and Gary Alan Westman. He was born in Chicago, Illinois on October 14, 1974. He currently resides in Highland Park, Illinois with his wife, Lisa, and two children, Keller and Mallory.

Keith attended public schools in Park Ridge, Illinois for the duration of his K-12 schooling. He graduated from National-Louis University in 1998 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Elementary Education. In 2005, Keith earned his Masters of Education degree in Educational Leadership from DePaul University.

Keith worked in the field of education for 14 years. He has been a classroom teacher, technology coordinator, and a middle school principal. Currently, Keith serves as a senior executive at a software company that provides human resources technologies to school districts throughout the world. In his most recent position, Keith has worked with school systems such as Austin Independent School District, Chicago Public Schools, and Anchorage Public Schools to name a few.

Keith is an active member of and frequent presenter for the American Association of School Personnel Administrators and its regional and state affiliates.

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

The Dissertation submitted by Keith Westman has been read and approved by the following committee:

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